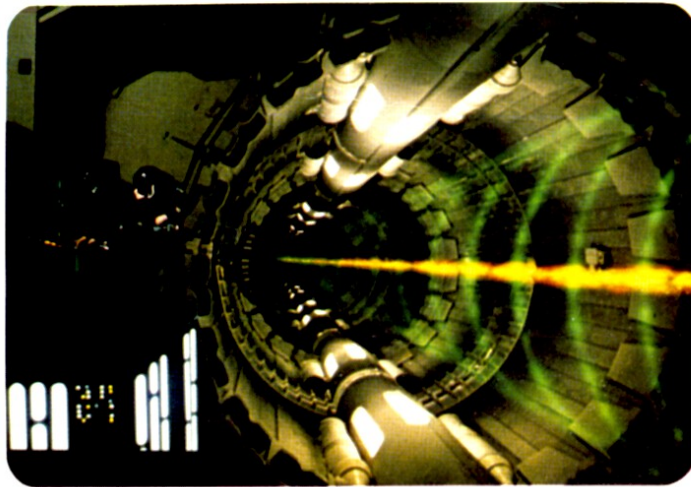


# FANTASCENE

FANTASCENE 4

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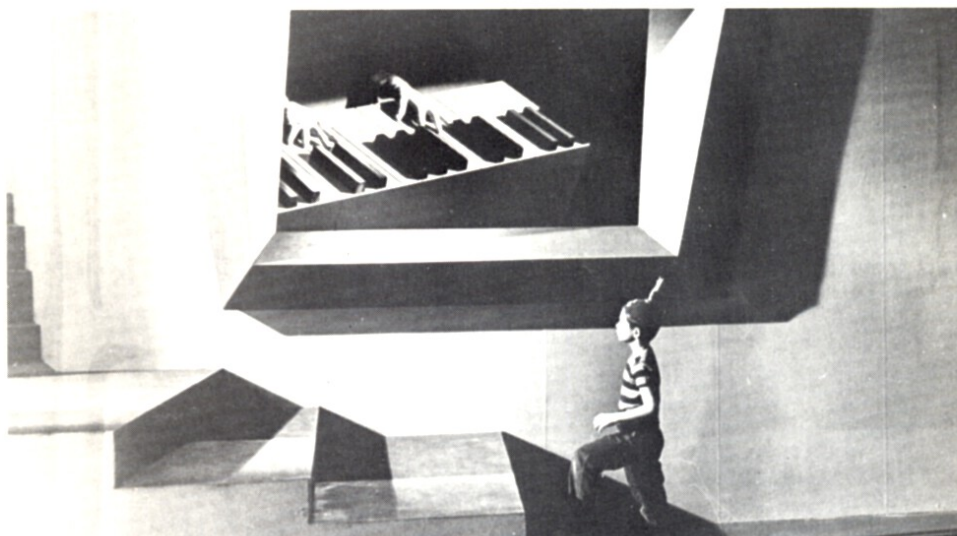




**LOOKING AHEAD**▷ Recognize the critter pictured directly below? No? Not surprising, since it's one of Irving Block's early, unused concepts of the Id from **FORBIDDEN PLANET**. Readers of *Fantascene* will see many more photos like this in the upcoming Jack Rabin —Irving Block—Louis DeWitt Scrapbook to appear in the next issue. Also: A detailed retroview on 5,000 **FINGERS OF DR. T** (pictured in middle row) including rare photos and interviews with Stanley Kramer, Tom Rettig and others who worked on the film. Other upcoming features include: The Wah Chang—Gene Warren Interviews, with a special behind-the-scenes look at **OUTER LIMITS** (pictured at bottom); A Portfolio-Checklist of Russian Space Films; Eric Hoffman's History of **TO THE DEVIL... A DAUGHTER**; and a **THIS ISLAND EARTH** edition of *Fantascene*!



Courtesy of Bob Burns



**Front cover:** Jillian and Barry Guiler experience a **CLOSE ENCOUNTER** on a country road near Muncie, Indiana. Bottom, left: X-wing ships above Yavin prepare to battle the Death Star. Right: The planet-destroying laser gun, created by Adam Beckett. From **STAR WARS**.

**Back cover:** left column (top to bottom): 1. Time seems to stand still in the stark police station designed by William Cameron Menzies for **INVADERS FROM MARS**. 2. David MacLean is confronted by two Martian giants. 3. The mutants—cold, mindless slaves of a bodiless, telepathic Martian 4. The mutants scurry about the underground passageways obeying the Martian's commands. Right column: 1. The entrance to the flying saucer is guarded by a mutant. 2. The Coral Bluffs Proving Grounds, site of the experimental rocket. Painting by Irving Block. 3. Major Cleary helps David bore an escape path through a caved-in wall. 4. The mutants provide locomotion for the Martian Intelligence. All photos from **INVADERS FROM MARS**. See story beginning on page 12 for details.

Courtesy of Bob Burns





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## staff

Editor: ROBERT SKOTAK  
 Associate Editor: SCOT HOLTON  
 Assistant Editor: ELAINE EDFORD  
 Research Editor: ERIC HOFFMAN  
 Production: ROBERT and DENNIS SKOTAK

We wish to thank the following for their time and assistance with this issue and works in progress: Bob Burns, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Tom Scherman, Charles Brill, Charles Lippincott, Stan Tingley, William Alland, Donald Heitzer, Brian De Palma, Mario Tosi, Ted Bohus, Dennis Muren, John Wash, Mike Minor.

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This issue dedicated to the memory of William Cameron Menzies.

## classifieds

**STILLS:** Color & B/W, All NEW Catalog, SF/Fantasy/Horror. Newly Doubled Inventory, Reduced Prices; Scripts, Production Art, Behind-The-Scenes Stills, 1,000's Listed. Catalog: \$1.00 to: RUR, 2354 Laurel Cyn. Blvd., LA, Calif. 90046.

**ART CRAFT PHOTO:** Rental Darkrooms, Photo-finishing, Copy Negs and Prints. 1900 Westwood Blvd., W. Los Angeles, Ca. (213) 475-3416.

**A Bonanza for Horror Music Buffs:** At last, all those great themes from the Universal horror classics by Hans J. Salter, plus John Cacavas' scary score from HORROR EXPRESS (CP-60226). Send \$6.00 to: Citadel Records, P.O. Box 1662, Burbank, Calif. 91507.

**WANTED:** Information and materials of any kind on TALES OF TOMORROW (CBS-TV show) for feature retrospective; especially production info., stills, scripts, etc. All loaned material guaranteed returned. Scot Holton, 8133 Elrita Dr., Los Angeles, Calif. 90046.

Still available: WAR OF THE WORLDS: A 25th Anniversary Tribute. Rare photos, Interviews, color effects shots. Order now. Send \$4.00 to: Jay Duncan, 4318 Larchmont Drive, El Paso, Texas, 79902.

The editors of Fantascene are seeking (and will trade or pay any reasonable price for) the following: behind-the-scenes photos (send list), newspaper and magazine clippings etc. from THIS ISLAND EARTH and FLIGHT TO MARS; copies of Fawcett Movie Comics MAN FROM PLANET X and DESTINATION MOON; shooting script to DESTINATION MOON.

## letter from the editor

First of all, we'd like to thank everyone for being patient while awaiting this much-delayed issue of Fantascene. We felt it well worth holding up the original publication date of this edition for the inclusion of key materials that arrived late. We hope you agree.

To those of you eagerly awaiting the second part of our ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS retroview, we must apologize for its not appearing in this issue. This was mainly due to the unanticipated lengthening of the INVADERS FROM MARS feature by the above mentioned late arrival of rare information essential to the article. This, coupled with the promise of additional ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS material in upcoming months prompted our decision to postpone the conclusion of the feature until Fantascene 5.

In this issue, however, we are pleased to present a career profile on one of the cinema's long-neglected pioneers of the fantastic, William Cameron Menzies. Due to Menzies's own high regard for INVADERS FROM MARS, the film became a logical companion piece to the great production designer's career story.

Currently in the works is a special "retrospect" edition of Fantascene devoted to extensive coverage of THIS ISLAND EARTH and WAR OF THE WORLDS. The primary focus of

this edition will be the Universal-International epic of interplanetary war, which will contain costume sketches, production photos, color frame enlargements, blueprints and a definitive production history featuring 18 interviews with crew members. WAR OF THE WORLDS will be our part 3 retrospect originally planned for Fantascene 3. It will feature many never-seen-before production sketches, blueprints, a detailed look at the war machines... and several surprises.

We have made few concessions to the commercial exigencies of magazine publication. We therefore sincerely thank you for your continued and much needed support. The following information is in answer to repeated inquiries: Fantascene is **not** available by subscription. Issues number 1 and 3 are completely sold out. Copies of Fantascene 2 (Danforth Interview, ROCKETSHIP X-M, KRONOS, FLIGHT TO MARS coverage, WAR OF THE WORLDS retrospect etc.) are still available for \$2.00 plus .45 postage. Order through: Dennis Skotak, 8564 Cardwell St., Westland, Mich. 48185. Please note that issues are sent promptly, but occasionally are lost in the mails. To be safe, allow four to five weeks for delivery before writing.

As usual, we hope you enjoy our efforts and look forward to hearing your comments.

The Editors



INVADERS FROM MARS



William Cameron Menzies believed motion pictures would lead the way for all the other practical arts because it was by far the most demanding. He further felt that the cinema could stimulate respect and appreciation for beauty through its tasteful design. Throughout his entire career of nearly 40 years, his pioneering work as film's first production designer converted those beliefs into some of the screen's greatest triumphs.

# william cameron MENZIES: A CAREER PROFILE

By Scot Holton and Robert Skotak

The authors are indebted to Richard Kritzer's researches into the career of William Cameron Menzies.

Menzies was an avid reader, and he loved to talk. Associates found him to be "hearty, vivacious and possessing of a spirited flair for humor." Great natural beauty fascinated him. He enjoyed dancing. And fantastic stories. . . . Most of all he loved drawing, and his eventual linking of the art of illustration with that of motion pictures played a significant part in the advancement of the cinema; an advancement that left a singular impact upon science-fiction and fantasy films.

On July 29, 1896, William Cameron Menzies was born in New Haven, Connecticut, to poor Scottish immigrant parents. His childhood years were a time of hardship. In spite of his family's difficulties, his mother sought to help their child cultivate a love for beauty. The nearby woods and beaches became a source of inspiration and enjoyment and frequent rides.

Menzies always referred to himself as a "synthetic" American of Scottish extraction. He had a profound devotion to the country of his ancestry, a devotion that had taken root when, at the age of seven, he went to Scotland to live with his grandparents. There the mystical romance of the country—particularly the Scottish Highlands—stirred the boy's imagination. Traveling through the lochs and mountains, he discovered an enchantment among the romantic settings that never left him. It fostered within him a deep love of beauty and legend.

Young Menzies' grandparents instilled their beliefs in pixies, elves, bogies, fairies and little people in him, and at that impressionable age, he began to draw them.

After three years, he returned to rural New England at which time he met an adventurous uncle who taught him chess, philosophy and an appreciation of the imagination. It quickly became apparent that the boy had an active imagination of his own as every spare piece of paper in the house was soon covered in drawings depicting exciting narratives. He made some early attempts at writing stories himself, all of which were extremely vivid and bigger-than-life.

In spite of these artistic leanings, his family hoped that he might become a mining engineer.

Until the age of 15, Menzies had been educated at schools in New Haven and Aberfeldy, Scotland. After that, he attended Hopkins Preparatory School, then went to Yale University. There he took his first art classes and it wasn't long before he began devoting himself entirely to art. At one point at Yale, he studied under one of America's great draftsmen, Edwin Taylor.

After Yale, Menzies studied art at the Art Students League in New York. At that time he immersed himself in the lively cafe and theatre life of 1916 Greenwich Village. This period was one of critical importance in his artistic growth as it gave him the opportunity to study with America's finest artists. Most notable among

these was Robert Henri, a believer in "vigorous brushwork and strong contrasts in value." Henri's approach exerted a lifelong influence upon Menzies' work.

By his second year at the League, he began freelancing his work to children's and trade publications. For the first time he experienced the joy of being paid well for something he loved—drawing. His professional career had begun.

In 1917, Menzies met motion picture director George Fitzmaurice quite by accident. The director gave the 19-year-old a tryout in the new medium, asking him to see if he could help establish a desert locale in a scene that was being filmed. Menzies quickly solved the prob-

William Cameron Menzies on the set of THINGS TO COME.



Special thanks to the following for their generous assistance researching the career of William Cameron Menzies: Eric Hoffman, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Mrs. Toby (Mignon) Menzies, Suzie (Menzies) Antels, Russell Antels, Bob Scherl, Bob Cushman, Forrest J. Ackerman, and Dennis Billows. The authors extend their appreciation to the following for their aid in researching INVADERS FROM MARS: Robert Haupt, Jay Duncan, Mark Frank, Wade Williams, 20th Century Fox, Jerry Neeley, Steve Polwort, Russell Antels, Suzie Antels, Mrs. Toby Menzies, David Ichikawa, Frank Rodriguez, The Academy of Motion Pictures, Eric Hoffman, Ben Chapman, Arthur Franz, Gene Hibbs, Mary Yerke, James Hunt, Irving Block, Edward Alperson Jr., Theodore Lydecker, Mrs. Morris Ankrum, Carey Ankrum, Boris Leven, John and Mary Seitz, Leonard Kunody, Raoul Kraushaar, Rosemary Roberts (formerly Mrs. John Tucker Battle), Richard Rosenfeld, Jack Rabin.



lem by standing on a chair and casting shadows on the actors with a couple of palm leaves. He was hired.

His first picture was *THE NAULAHKA*, produced at a studio buried in the wilds of Fort Lee, New Jersey. His primary contribution was the set design for a harem. He worked on another film, *INNOCENT*, before he entered service for a boring 22 months between Cuba and Europe during World War I. Before he shipped out he married Toby Mignon—a marriage that lasted four decades.

After the war, Menzies' motion picture career fully blossomed. He worked for a time as a sketch artist and a designer for the newly formed Mayflower Company. But the eastern studios began to collapse, and along with numerous other creative people, Menzies moved to California. There, he contributed design drawings for the Mary Pickford film, *ROSITA*. Through her he met Douglas Fairbanks. They were very impressed with the young Menzies and provided his biggest breaks. Between 1921 and 1924 he designed *THE THREE MUSKETEERS*, *ROBIN HOOD* and *THIEF OF BAGDAD* for them at United Artists, and the Rudolph Valentino pictures, *THE EAGLE* and *COBRA*.

Not long afterwards, he began a long association with Joseph Schenck, designing sets for *THE LADY*, *HER SISTER FROM PARIS*, *KIKI* (for which he impressionistically recreated New York), *CAMILLE* and *THE DOVE*. In 1928 he won the newly formed Academy of Motion Pictures' first award for art direction for two pictures: *THE DOVE* and *THE TEMPEST*.

When Schenck went to United Artists, William Menzies went with him. He nearly killed himself with overwork as he took over the whole lot as art director. He worked on over 60 films and did a large percentage of the drawings required himself. His main interest at the time was in the design of the set. He paid little attention to what would ultimately become his forte: arrangement of performers, composition, staging of scenes and directorial mechanics.

Menzies' art continued to grow, reaching new heights whenever a project involving an element of the romantic arose. The silent *THE BELOVED ROGUE* was one such project and his drawings of ancient castles, gloomy dungeons, and royal pageantry were inspired, mysterious, even poetic.

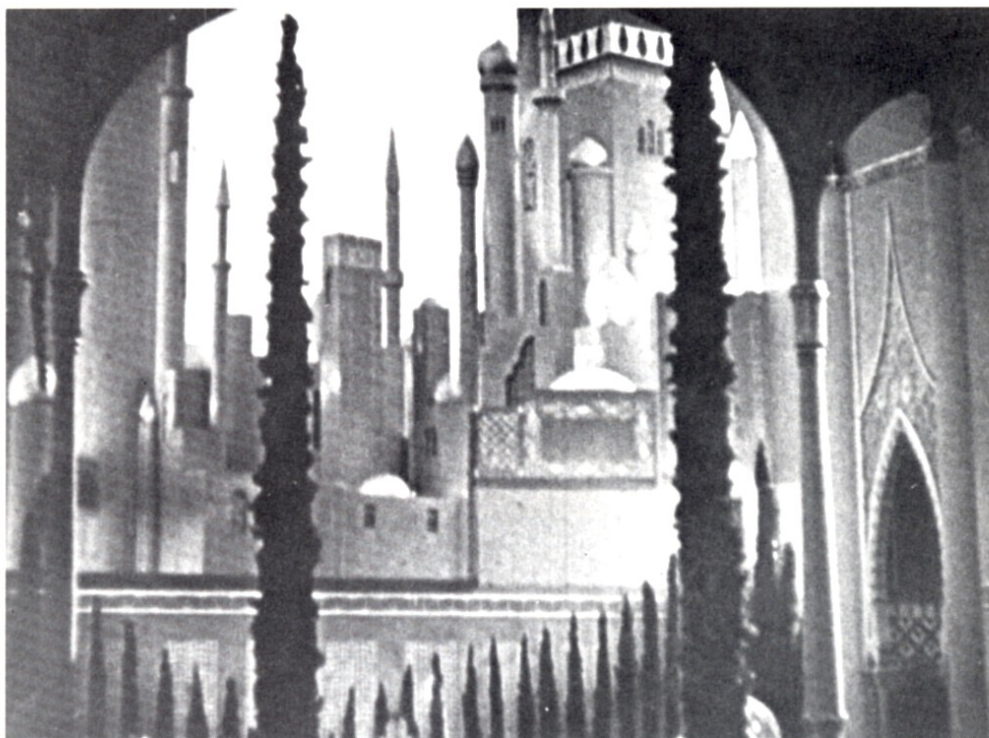
Few sets were used in the early days of sound, a time when the importance of the images became secondary to the spoken word: The first United Artists' film in sound, *COQUETTE*, was a prime example. It featured a total of only six sets. This disturbed the visually-attuned Menzies. Consequently, he took great steps to elaborate the pictorial design for the early sound production, *BULL-DOG DRUMMOND*. By the time he was done working on the scenario with director F. Richard Jones, there were 60 sets and over 300 drawings. As a result, the film was a history-maker; the first successful blending of silent and sound film techniques. Subsequent Menzies-designed productions (*ALIBI*, *THE FRONT PAGE*, and *CONDEMNED*) were all characterized by this approach. It was a significant step forward in the evolution of the cinema.

By this time, Menzies had become the highest-paid, most in-demand designer working in films. Domestically this enabled him to design his own home in Beverly Hills and provide comfort for his wife and daughter, Suzie.

His home reflected in its tudor-style and furnishings his continued attachment to England. Further evidence of the imaginative nature of the man who lived within were his handcarved goblin and gargoyle heads which decorated the exterior walls.

Menzies often brought his work home, preferring to create within a tiny study he'd built atop the garage in the backyard. Within the room, full of arabesqued wallpaper and curtains, he spent many busy hours. The windows provided a view of trees and garden that effectively shut-out the modern world. In that room was born the art of many great motion pictures.

"There is a spot in between the scenario and



Top: Menzies' vision of "Everytown," 2036 A.D. From *THINGS TO COME*. Middle: Stylized cityscape of ancient Bagdad. From 1924 version of *THIEF OF BAGDAD*. Bottom: Prowling the corridors of a gloomy Scottish castle is the family's dark secret: an ancestor born as a monstrous frog. From *THE MAZE*.



the direction," Menzies stated, "that an artist, trained in film fundamentals can usefully fill." By this he referred to the concept of Production Design; the intermediate process between the printed word and its actualization on celluloid. Menzies originated the entire system of pre-determining the look of a motion picture through numerous sketches, drawings and paintings. This technique allowed for greater control of all aspects of actual production, not the least of which was the matter of budget.

He would usually begin by making thumbnail sketches on the edges of his scripts. His daughter Suzie Antels recalled: "He'd have a yellow pad with stubby pencils and make all these little sketches, with tiny squares and 'hieroglyphics' in them that would break down the scenario he was working on. They would put his storyboards right next to the camera

which would place the actors, and show where the lighting and props should go." This use of many small drawings accompanying a scenario was unique to motion pictures, but actually dated back to the method used by the Japanese in the preparation of their scenarios for their ancient theater, Kabuki.

"The first thing I do when I start to sketch," Menzies stated in an interview at the time, "is draw in circles for the faces of the actors. I figure out the set as a background to the group, even taking into consideration how many feet an actor will have to walk to get from center stage to exit at left center." Among the things he kept in mind were: clean, strong elements that kept the image clear even during movement; complimentary compositions at the end of one scene and the beginning of the next; or, for "shock effect," strongly contrast-

ing elements between one scene and the next.

"Composition is **not** accidental. It must be motivated, and every shot must contribute in some manner to the story. Good composition doesn't cost any more than bad composition." The importance Menzies attached to composition allowed him to create dramatic patterns out of people and props. This often made for increased tension in even a minor film like *THE WHIP HAND* (RKO, 1951), wherein the arrangements of sheet-clad figures and a decayed town stimulated a strong emotional response.

A critic, commenting about Menzies' career up to that point, said: "[After Griffith's *INTOLERANCE*] Menzies came. His *THIEF OF BAGDAD* sets, after the ponderous dullness of the backgrounds used by Griffith, were like the butterfly after the worm; airy, imaginative, blown into two dimensional space by a perfection that stopped little short of genius." The same critic further suggested that Menzies' art direction proved that design was capable of telling as much of a story as either the acting or directing, sighting *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* as a comparable example. With Menzies, design "advanced the drama."

After 11 straight years at United Artists, he went to Fox, where in 1931 he directed his first film, the "semi-supernatural" *THE SPIDER*. It was a production that allowed Menzies to indulge himself in stark, austere sets, dimly lit Gothic arches and characters moving in black silhouette. It proved to be a popular film. Critics felt it was "well paced, adequately acted, finely lit and photographed." More than one reviewer, however, commented, "Too bad more time wasn't devoted to story development rather than actual physical production." This criticism was leveled at most of the "fantastic" films Menzies would go on to direct. It was as if he had become so caught up in the imaginative settings that the characters seemed of little importance.

Menzies continued to run himself into the ground with work. He found time to direct *CHANDU THE MAGICIAN* in 1932, but it proved to be difficult for him to handle directorial assignments, so much was he in demand as a designer.

At Paramount he did *WHARF ANGEL* (1934) which followed his work on *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* (Warner Brothers, 1933) as a writer as well as designer. (He had by this time become a member of the Art Directors, Directors and Writers Guilds.)

At his busiest moments Menzies always longed to return to his beloved Scotland, and imagined walking the sea coasts of England, sketching old castles and idling away quiet days. He painted atmospheric landscapes on these subjects in the rare instances of spare time. He read voraciously as well, often taking in two or three novels a night. Throughout his work and relaxation he smoked heavily, up to three packs of cigarettes a day.

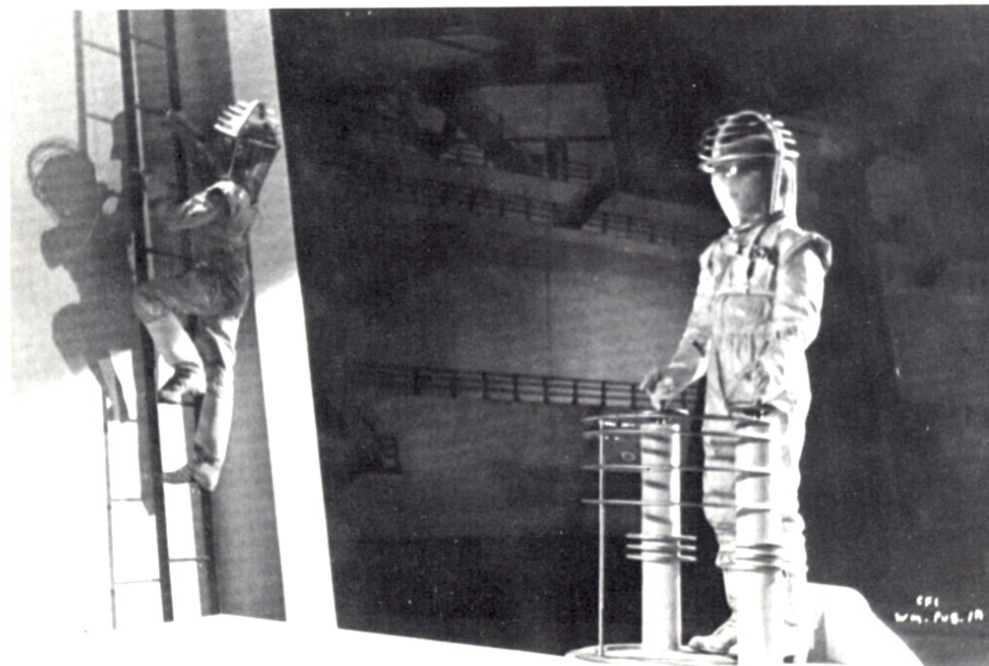
Menzies' pride and joy were screen "tricks" or "devices" as he called them. How did he define a screen trick? "It's the way we fool the camera, not the audience. The camera is the real heavy because it sees what we don't want it to see. . . . When I directed *THE SPIDER* I wanted to use that gag about the magician cutting off the woman's head. Well, I wanted to do it without cutting, shooting it in a single sequence and keeping the camera moving for the entire scene. Of course, we could have cut it together, but it was more fun to do it the other way, just for our own satisfaction."

Menzies' interest in effects went back to the days when he watched the Pearl White adventures. He believed the use of large scale sets and devices would continue to be popular "because the camera is the perfect medium for them." Along these lines he tried several experiments aimed to wed his colossal set experiments with music. He explored this idea in 12 musical shorts, the music for which was handled by Hugo Riesenfeld. Among those in the series were: *IRISH RHAPSODY*, *1812 OVERTURE* and *THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE* (many years before Disney).

By 1939 Menzies had directed the monumental *THINGS TO COME* (London Film Productions, 1936). In spite of the incredible scope of its designs, Menzies continued to further



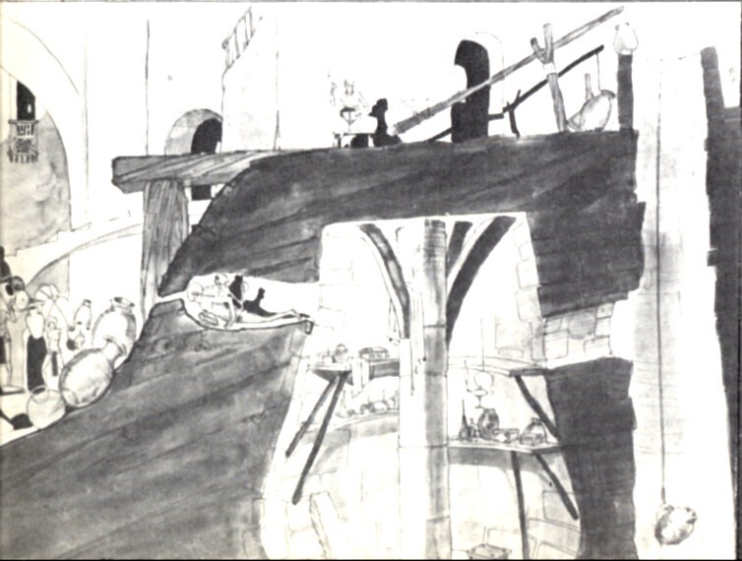
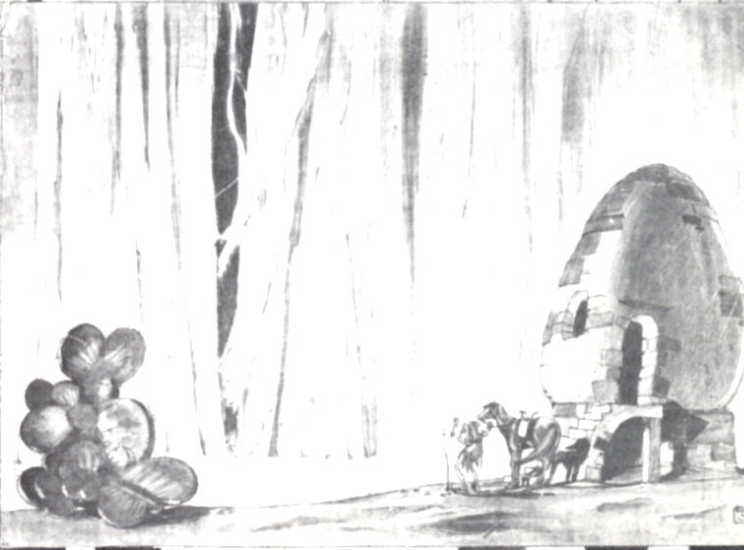
Monolithic sculpture by rebel artist Theotocopulous reflects the grandeur and omnipresence of man's progress in *THINGS TO COME*.



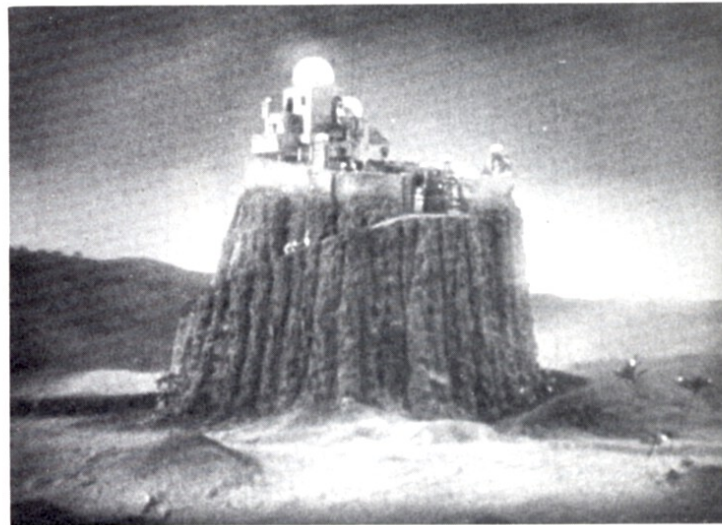
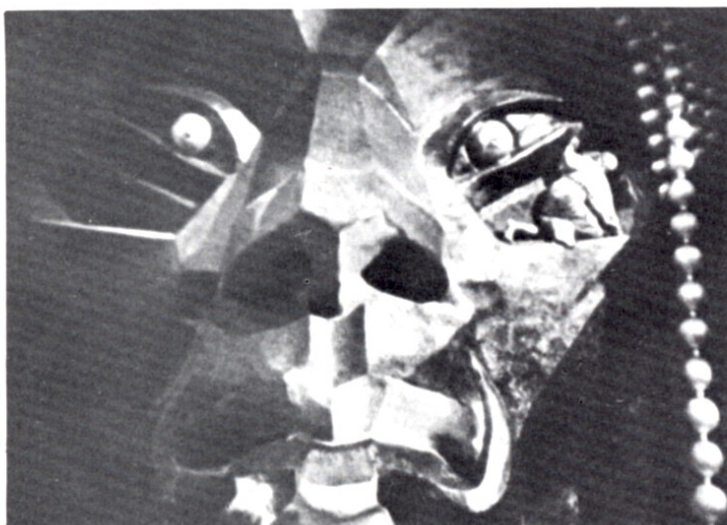
Workers clad in protective suits construct the world to come.

Opposite: Five of Menzies' production drawings for the 1924 version of *THIEF OF BAGDAD*. He felt that a production designer is a composite of an advance director, extra cameraman and an art director.









Top left: Douglas Fairbanks Sr., in search of the magic chest in *THIEF OF BAGDAD*, encounters a fire-breathing dragon (actually a disguised alligator). Right: The thief and the spirit of the trees. Bottom, left: A slave steals the All-Seeing Eye. This composition was re-created exactly in the 1940 version of *THIEF OF BAGDAD*. Right: Miniature castle and landscape typifies Menzies' fanciful design work.

explore and expand upon his design theories. Throughout the remainder of his life he worked on numerous major, and several minor, productions each of which in their own way reflected various facets of his genius. Among his films as art director were: *THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER* (1938), *OUR TOWN* (1940), *KING'S ROW* (1941), *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS* (1943) and *ARCH OF TRIUMPH* (1948).

One of Menzies' greatest accomplishments was his design work for *GONE WITH THE WIND*. Here he was required to visualize 30 great sets. Through his production paintings the position of actors, sets, camera angles, etc. were pre-determined, saving an immense cost in time and money. *GONE WITH THE WIND* was one of the largest designing jobs ever accomplished. This mammoth production was literally copied from Menzies' 3,000 detailed colored drawings. His sets and his colors flowed smoothly into each other from daybreak to sunset.

"As production designer on the film," Menzies stated, "I had long felt that the full dramatic effect to be achieved with color had not yet been realized. Margaret Mitchell's epic story was the perfect vehicle for the working out of my theories. . . . Instead of mixing all the colors to make pictures much like picture postcards—except that they move—I sometimes used one color alone, or two colors to make vivid a moment or mood that had to be emphasized."

Menzies succeeded nobly. Yet the fullness of some of his visions for the film never saw the light of day. Menzies had a grandiose—and, in

retrospect, visionary—concept for the spectacle of the burning of Atlanta: At that point in the film he wanted the curtains to pull back alongside the screen to reveal three images projected simultaneously in the form of a continuous panorama. It would have been the first "cinerama" presentation, well over a decade before the fact.

But after all, fantasy was the subject dearest to his heart. As prestigious, impressive and historical his work on *GONE WITH THE WIND* had been, it was an unpleasant ordeal for him. His greatest love was for fantasy and science-fiction subjects; for films like *THIEF OF BAGDAD* and for pictures long-forgotten by the general public, pictures like *INVADERS FROM MARS* and *THE MAZE*.

In 1923, William Cameron Menzies walked into Douglas Fairbanks' office at United Artists, carrying a stack of drawings so large and heavy he had to balance them on his head. Any first impressions Fairbanks and Mary Pickford had that the artist was too young to be entrusted with major assignments quickly dissolved. The subject of the drawings were the designs for the proposed motion picture, *THIEF OF BAGDAD*—a subject that brought out the very best of Menzies' talents.

"He was highly effected by make-believe, fairy tales, and illustrators like Edmund Dulac," recalled his daughter, "He did much better at things like that. . . . He was particularly attracted to Arthur Rackham and that style of imagery. There was a book Dulac illustrated called *The Kingdom of the Pearl* that Barrymore gave to him, and it was one of his favorites.

He'd also have loved to have done a story about the Loch Ness Monster. He even wrote a screenplay and did some drawings of it."

Menzies' designs for *THIEF OF BAGDAD* resulted in some of the most sumptuous sets constructed for a motion picture. They embellished a simple story: A common thief (Fairbanks) seeks to win the heart of a princess (Julianne Johnston). In so trying he embarks on a series of fantastic adventures in which he journeys through strange environments and battles various monsters.

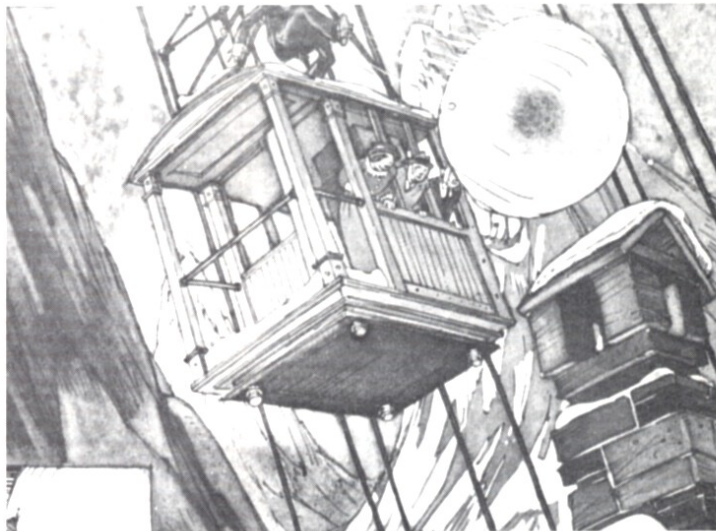
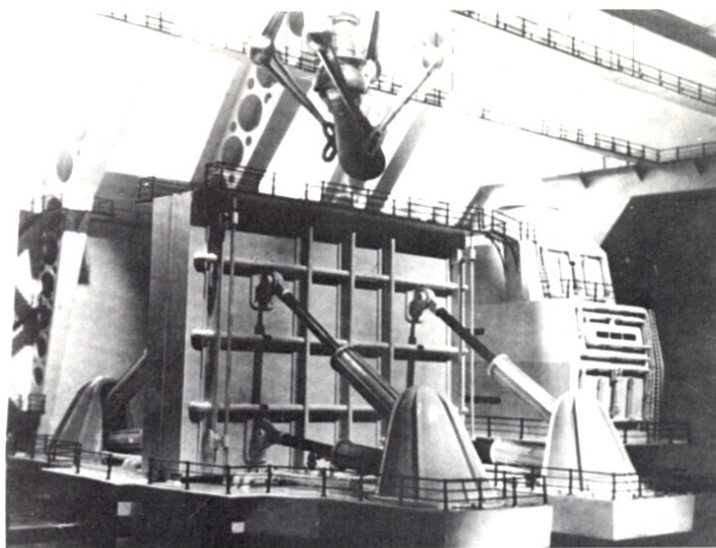
Menzies invested the plot with a mind-boggling grandeur, typified by his dreamy visualization of Bagdad. It appears as a labyrinthian city of columns, turrets and towers reaching like fingers into the sky, dwarfing the crowds that moved through its streets. Rooms were cavernous in size, and every detail—polished floors, iron gates, leaded windows, mosaic tiles, urns, etc.—were the subject of Menzies' imaginative touch. The entire look of the film was governed by his unique use of scale, distortion and contrasting tonal values.

Hampton De Ruth's special effects depicting a flying horse, a giant sea spider and a bat-man were crude by any standards, but the film didn't dwell on them, reveling instead in its wonderland of scenery.

"The first *THIEF OF BAGDAD* was one of his favorites" according to Mrs. Antels, "and it was the first time he was really recognized as a genius. Fairbanks had so much money to spend on it and [he and Mary Pickford] thought daddy was just marvelous."

Menzies' work on Joseph Mankiewicz' *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* (Warner Brothers, 1933)





Top, left: On the set of Alexander Korda's 1940 *THIEF OF BAGDAD*. Right: Menzies' mechanical designs for *THINGS TO COME*. Bottom, left: Menzies' passion for design did not end at the studio gates. He once spent months meticulously decorating every inch of the upstairs hallway in his home. Right: Early in his career, Menzies illustrated children's stories. While recuperating from an illness he created a whimsical pictorial story on his own about an ever-growing snowball that rolls down a slope and raises havoc in a small village.

could hardly salvage the film. The argument that it was produced merely to take advantage of all the contract players at Warners is well-founded. That, combined with the cheaply painted sets and poor pacing, resulted in a rather unendearing mood and audience alienation from its characters.

The mammoth script for *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* was the size of Los Angeles' phone directory. Each page was illustrated by Menzies' sketch for the scene described on that page. The 600 drawings he made for the film entailed not only all the set, costume and character designs, but the working out of special effects as well. One sketch of "Humpty-Dumpty, for example, included the following effects recommendation by Menzies: "CLOSE UP, leg of Mutton. The room and characters in the background are on a transparency. The actor is in a mask, with arms and legs worked as props—a la Humpty-Dumpty."

*THINGS TO COME* premiered on Friday, February 21, 1936 at 8:45 p.m. at the Leicester Square Theatre in London to an enthralled audience. It had taken 18 months to shoot the film, and its budget of \$1 million topped anything yet produced in Britain. It represented the work of an oversized crew which included a team of 200 people who had been employed to work on the special effects alone. And the director of the entire huge effort, working from a screenplay by H. G. Wells, was William Cameron Menzies.

The critical cheers were loud at the time: Writer Walter Webster claimed, "This film is too good," going on to state that viewing the

film had been the most interesting experience he'd ever had in a movie theater. "Only two things could have resulted from the conception of this picture," claimed the *Sunday Express* reviewer, "a kind of 'Frankenstein' or a film of an importance that is bigger than the cinema. . . . It was hit or miss. It hit." Superlatives seemed inadequate to the *Daily Mail's* Seton Margave: "In sheer triumphant filmcraft *THINGS TO COME* is beyond all comparison the greatest film that has ever been produced." It was almost universally recognized as a landmark in England's motion picture history.

While favorably impressed with the film's physical attributes, it fared not nearly as well with American critics. "Dialogue is intolerably bad" declared *Variety*. "Characters make long, meaningless speeches. At the final fade-out one of the characters, who had already said far too much, is still speech-making about humanity and the future of invention." The view of the film as one unsurpassed in design and imagery, but emotionally and philosophically void came to be the accepted one with the passing of the decades.

Producer Alexander Korda became interested in author H. G. Wells' prestige while seeking a film project of importance, something big enough to open the eyes of moviegoers around the world to the British film industry.

Korda signed Wells to adapt his philosophical novel *The Shape of Things to Come* into screenplay form. Wells committed himself by signing the back of a postcard.

Wells' first treatment, entitled "One Hundred Years to Come," had to be rewritten twice

again—the final time with the aid of Lajos Biro. Briefly stated, the result was a 100-year overview of humanity, beginning in the year 1940 with the outbreak of World War II. Wells envisioned an eventual "Golden Age Ruled by Science" overcoming the post-war rise of barbaric communities ruled by petty tyrants.

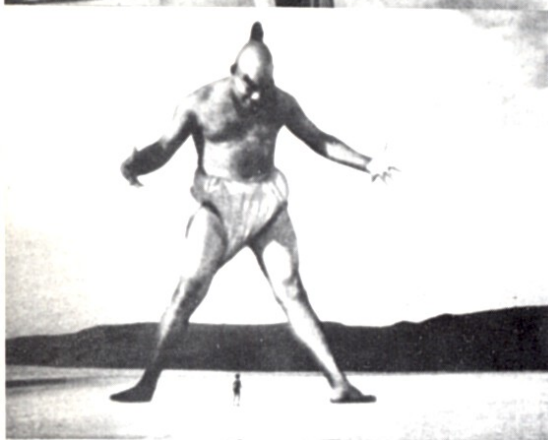
The screenplay amounted to little more than a thinly-disguised articulation of Wells' hatred of militarist-capitalist thinking and was certainly not the work of a writer in touch with the sensibilities of his intended audience. Ironically, whatever was memorable about *THINGS TO COME* were its sets, designs, props and compositions, and less the aspects of the film determined by Wells.

Throughout production Menzies not only had to contend with the magnitude logistical problems of the filming, but the constant presence of Wells himself. He deferred to Wells time and time again mostly due to Korda's somewhat patronizing insistence. The quiet Menzies viewed Wells as a "very testy man," particularly since the author frequently sent the director notes dictating (in not-too-diplomatic terms) how to direct and design the picture.

The following personal notes from Wells indicate the kind of comments he made on the film while viewing the daily rushes:

"Dear Menzies; These final scenes of Cabal with the dead Boss and with Roxana will not do. What is wrong with the Boss scene is Cabal's delivery of his last line. He stands up and shouts it. But he ought to say it clearly and calmly to himself. Massie is an emotional man. That is his dangerous quality and here he has been allowed to be emotional almost to the





point of shouting hysterically . . . and Roxana must not lie flat in the foreground. I took great pains to pose her for that scene . . . she has to be in the middle of the picture for this speech and not Massie. (I got a chap to snapshot her attitude and got him to give you a print of it. Not the slightest attention has been given to this.)

"All these Cecil de Mille effects of crowds milling about and so on that you are spending so much thought and time and money upon do not matter a rip in comparison with the effective handling of this mental drama. They are very effective in their way but they are **not** this film.

"I pray you take heed of these points, Menzies. . . . The great danger of the film is to make Massie a preachy prig. He must not intone and shout. . . . Yours in affectionate admiration (but the author of the Film, mind you), H. G. Wells."

Menzies knew most of the fault of the characters lay with the screenplay itself. On his own he continued to work closely with the miniature department (under Ned Mann) and the optical effects experts (Edward Cohen, Paul Morell, Jack Thomas and Harry Zech) to play up the very aspects of the film he seemed to know would excel over the story itself. It was particularly frustrating, however, to receive little thumbnail drawings from Wells himself, indicating the positions of the actors, accompanied by notes that indicated how Menzies could "improve" his designs. For instance, this memo commenting upon several production drawings Menzies had submitted of the great building machines:

"This is all wrong. Get it in better perspective. The film is an **H. G. WELLS** film and your highest best is needed for the complete realization of my treatment. Bless you." [sic.]

In spite of this, Menzies persevered. Filming was done at the Old London Studios where a London composite, complete with the dome of St. Pauls and Oxford Circus represented an imaginary "Everytown." To create the building of the "New World of the Airmen" dozens of miniature sets were filmed, combined with live action via tiny rear-view screens inserted into the models. Actors in other scenes were filmed against full-sized projected backgrounds of huge hydraulic machinery, pumps and foundries. Hanging miniatures, created by Ross Jacklin, suspended in perspective to match full-sized sets, were used in several shots that have even until now not been topped. A number of miniatures included tiny figures of people attached to separately moving walkways, which gave the impression of great crowds surging toward the colossal space gun.

While the specific designing tasks had been relegated to others (settings by Vincent Korda; costumes by John Armstrong, Rene Hubert and the Marchioness of Queensbury, etc.) the overall production design concepts were those of Menzies. In the final analysis it was his contribution that lent dignity and prestige to the great author's untypically labored screenplay.

Menzies served as associate producer on Britain's next epic production, the remake of **THIEF OF BAGDAD** (United Artists, 1940). It was even more elaborate than **THINGS TO COME** at twice the earlier film's budget. The story has been described as "one-third Arabian Knights, one-third Disney and one-third Schubert musical." Four script writers were required to pen the story. The result became possibly the finest fantasy film of all time. No other of its type ever matched its beauty, its vibrant

1. The sultan of Basra (played by screenwriter Miles Malleon) rides into the sky on a flying mechanical horse—a gift by which the evil Jaffar (Conrad Veidt) hopes to bargain for the sultan's daughter. 2. Rex Ingram, as the Djinni, cries out upon his release; "For the first thousand years I swore to enrich the one who freed me with all the riches of the Earth. But in the second thousand years my imprisoned spirit swore vengeance for all who lived and were free!" 3. The thief (Sabu) taunts the giant. Matte work by Tom Howard. 4. Within the statue of the Goddess of Light looms a massive spider web. 5. Abu, the thief, battles the giant spider. As associate producer, Menzies masterminded many of the film's special effects. All above from **THIEF OF BAGDAD**, 1940 version.

Technicolor hues or its breathtaking designs. Louella Parsons observed at the time: "[Designers] Zoltan Korda and Menzies deserved much of the credit for the settings that were so beautiful they brought forth gasps of admiration [from the audience]."

Originally producer Alexander Korda wanted Menzies to direct as well as design the production, but Menzies was still involved with his work on **GONE WITH THE WIND** in America. He arrived later, taking over creative supervision of the film.

An entire Oriental port and the city of Basra were built for the production. In the port, 15 huge ships rose 25 feet above the water, all painted in stunning colors. Each featured a detailed coat-of-arms on its hull.

Menzies' propensity for massive-ceilinged sets culminated in the awesome Sultan's Palace, whose minarets and domes were the things dreams were made of. The walls were painted in deep blues and tints that epitomized Menzies' belief in strong color values. Elsewhere, the palace's lacquered-gold gates stretched 68 feet into the sky.

The Sultan's toys were designed after the Pantheon gods and goddesses in the Royal Museum. Actress Mary Morris played Halima, the Sultan's six-armed mechanical "toy" doll—a strange creation that foreshadowed the Martian Intelligence in **INVADERS FROM MARS**. The application of her silver-blue makeup took four and a half hours. Elaborate 12-inch high headgear completed her fanciful costume.

The Djinni was played by black actor Rex Ingram. Most of his scenes involved traveling matte shots (the work of Tom Howard) that combined him and the tiny figure of Sabu as the thief. "That part on the beach where Sabu finds the bottle," explained Mrs. Antels, "was shot at Tenby in Wales. It's just an endless beach of yellow sand. They spent an awfully long time there, and that was just before the war broke out. . . . Evidently very few people had ever seen a black man in that part of the world in that era. He was beautiful and had that booming voice. Little kids would follow Rex down the village streets and point at him and he thought it was very funny and marvelous. They called him a Blackamoor."

Several scenes called for the 200-foot-tall Djinni to lift Sabu in his hand. To accomplish this, a giant hand was built. According to studio production notes: "Technicians produced the hand by first modeling it in clay. From the wrist to the fingertips it measured some 40 feet and required seven tons of clay. When modeling was completed, 36 sectional molds were made which were assembled over a collection of complex machinery which enabled the hand to be opened and closed. When the whole hand was complete, it was sprayed with over a hundred coats of rubber latex (which took the place of skin). This allowed it to clench, while masking the joints in the mold."

Among the technicians working on creations such as these was sculptor Chris Mueller. (He later did much of the work on **THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON** costume and sculpted the giant squid in **20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA**). In **THIEF OF BAGDAD**, Mueller carved the minutely-detailed architectural models, such as the temple of the Goddess of Light.

On September 3, 1939, Menzies, Korda and company were nearing completion of filming at the Denham Studios when World War II broke out. Production continued for a while at a studio barricaded with sandbags and air-raid shelters. Location shooting in Africa had to be cancelled, and the crew journeyed to the Grand Canyon in Arizona to complete the film.

Menzies' daughter recalled: "Daddy was terrified when the war started, and couldn't get out of there fast enough, much as he loved England. He just was not going to lay his life on the line; and Alex Korda wanted to get the hell out of there too. Daddy said when they first gave him his gas mask he nearly fainted! He came back on a blacked-out Swedish ship. That was about October, and we were all worried too."

"For the rest of the interiors here they used the Goldwyn Studios. . . . Sabu was a good friend of daddy's up until he died. He was 16 at the time and had only been in **JUNGLE BOOK** and **ELEPHANT BOY** previous to **THIEF OF BAGDAD**. He was instinctively a good actor. They really did find him in an elephant stable in India."

Near the end of the 1940's Menzies increasingly involved himself with fantasy subjects.



He formed the Menzies-Finney Company in 1949 in order to make the first 35mm films for TV. "He saw that this might be a particularly good media for a special kind of movie made just for TV," Mrs. Antels explained. "It was a time when all TV was live. One of the films was *THE TELL-TALE HEART* with Richard Basehart, and the other was *THE TERRIBLY STRANGE BED* by Wilkie Collins with Richard Greene. They were absolutely wonderful." These films were produced and directed by Menzies at Hal Roach Studios and represented experiments into what could be done with minimal resources. *TELL-TALE HEART*, for instance, had 21 pages of dialogue and 55 camera setups. The carefully prepared Menzies shot the entire film in one day! Total cost: \$9,000. He'd kept his sets simple and stark to aid in clarity. All the background and costumes were especially designed in black, white and gray tones. Two other proposed films (*PIT AND THE PENDULUM* and *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*), however, were never produced.

Science-fiction was at that time attracting wider audiences, and Menzies knew it wouldn't be long before motion pictures would turn to that field for inspiration. That prospect interested him to the point that he developed his own stories for possible production. One of these, an untitled "Story Idea," was far ahead of its time in its dealings with space travel and cellular regeneration: The plot concerned a young cytologist (a scientist specializing in the study of cells) who indicates in the story that: "... In a very short time, man can create, or at least control through his knowledge, the cell and its behavior and growth." The scientist becomes obsessed with the idea that man could become the "arbiter of creation."

The cytologist's experimentation coincides with the flight of several space probes launched to an unnamed planet in the solar system. As a research scientist, he accompanies the first manned exploratory mission to the planet. The crew embarks in a dome-covered vehicle across the terrain: "Although it is very hot, the planet is lit with a strange half-light, and although one can see for a great distance, much of the detail is lost in soft shadows." Suddenly the explorers spot something moving: "The mass flounders up and into the light. We see it clearly for only a moment, then it falls back into the shadow. But in that flash we see a monster. It seems to be a mixture of all moving life—part reptile, part animal, and in its movement to rise on its hind legs, part man. Again the monster rears up and we notice its features. It is constructed of cells, visible cells, the size of golf balls and of a jelly-like consistency and the color of seaweed. We see that part of one of its members has been badly torn . . . now we see a dreadful activity—seething and multiplying like the bubbles in soap suds, the cells are rapidly reproducing themselves and replacing [the creature's] severed limb like the Hydra of Greek mythology."

The space travelers just make it back to their ship as a group of the monsters attack. One of the giants reaches into the entry port and loses a chunk of its skin as the hatch is shut. The ship blasts off and returns to Earth.

The cytologist has secreted the alien cell specimen in his lab and soon it becomes apparent to his friends that he is obsessed with his plan to create and control cellular life in a test tube. The cytologist eventually hides "somewhere in the wilds of South America" in order to continue his work. He constructs a laboratory equipped with enormous glass tubes. In his experiments he attempts to blend human cells with the alien ones. After much bizarre cellular growth, two figures—a human male and female—tower within the great glass tubes: "It is the Garden of Eden in a test tube. The two figures stand almost side by side ten feet tall and more magnificent than the figures in the frieze of the Parthenon." The experiment's success is, alas, short-lived as a new growth starts up: "We see that the figures are being absorbed by the stronger cells of the planet. They become more and more indistinct as they are absorbed by the growing mass of the more virile cells. They increase in size, an almost formless tangle of cells, until they project above the lip of the container and have become one figure, but a figure more monstrous than anything on the planet, because now, there is a third feature added to the beast-reptile and that is the distorted semblance of man."

Horror-stricken, the scientist destroys his lab and himself in order to stop the endlessly growing monstrosity. In the end, all that re-

mains are charred fragments of the scientist's diary alluding to his supremacy over nature.

Incredible as the story was, it was an intriguing attempt to blend several genre types. Its numerous set and lighting descriptions indicated Menzies' personal interest in both the subject matter and science-fiction devices. It represented the kind of imaginative adventure he was attracted to and wanted to bring to motion pictures; but, like his Loch Ness Monster project, it never came to pass.

Several of the images from this story idea were later grafted onto his next fantasy project, *INVADERS FROM MARS* (1953); a project that afforded him the pleasure of designing gnome-like green giants and a saucer set that recalled the palace interiors from the first *THIEF OF BAGDAD*.

Shortly after *INVADERS FROM MARS*, he worked on another "budget" picture, *THE MAZE* (Allied Artists, 1953). This film, shot in 3-D, was another favorite with its story of the weird goings-on in an ancient Scottish castle. Menzies pretty much ignored Salvatore Dali's illustrations for the Maurice Sandoz novel on which the film was based; as both the production designer and director, he etched the film with his own singular style and no other. His castle was an imposing structure of great block-like rooms and corridors, elongated stairways, oversized doors and oblique passageways. One night view from a tower window of a light moving by unseen hands through the maze was exceptionally chilling in its subdued perfection.

The horrible secret of the film turned out to be a man-sized frog with a human soul. It was an eerie, even Lovecraftian idea, yet not one that held up believably on a motion picture screen. Menzies' direction here could have benefitted from judicious editing in these sequences, since it was mainly faulted by excessive views of the creature itself.

With *THE MAZE*, Menzies showed a growing competence in handling the "human" side of his material. Generally, Menzies held little interest in his characters and, as a result, his films as a director tended to be emotionally detached. Through Richard Carlson's performance and his own interest in the setting of *THE MAZE*, Menzies was able to achieve a greater sense of emotional involvement than he had previously.

The now white-haired man with the little mustache continued to be active right up to his last work as associate producer on Michael Todd's epic *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS* (U.A., 1956). Based on Jules Verne's novel, it was a story with borderline fantasy elements. Menzies worked on one brief fantasy sequence with effects veteran Charlie Baker which involved a far shot of the Earth as a rocket was launched into space. The scene (originally designed as a pre-credit opener to the film) was ultimately dropped in favor of a real rocket filmed taking off.

According to Menzies' daughter, "Daddy had an operation for cancer while they were still in production on *AROUND THE WORLD*, but he was through with his part. He did the bullfight sequences in Spain, which he hated. He hated bullfights. He thought they were savage, and here he had to direct one, although it was a comic one with Cantinflas.

"He 'died' on the operating table. They had brought him back, but that last year of his life was awful . . . They got rid of all the cancer . . . but he couldn't talk. He died of a heart attack in 1956, a year after the operation."

Menzies' death symbolized the ending of a whole era of motion pictures—an era of large scale entertainments that still reflected the personalities of individual artists. He shaped some of the screen's most beautiful fantasies, and impressed each film he worked on with his unique signature. In a larger sense, William Cameron Menzies, through his art, was a major influence in the development of cinematic techniques and artistry. □

1. Abu discovers the great spider web. 2. Far below the web, octopi swim about in a luminous pool. 3. The immense statue in whose forehead rests the All-Seeing Eye. All above from *THIEF OF BAGDAD*. 4. One of the finely detailed miniatures, complete with tiny, moving figures, designed by Menzies for *THINGS TO COME*. 5. A close-up from Menzies TV adaptation of Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart".







"The mystery of the stars has never palled and, through the ages, man has sought the answers to the secrets there contained. What manner of man, if any, inhabits these other planets moving in outer space?"

Night. A brief flash of lightning illuminates the MacLean house nestled among the rolling sandhills. Lying asleep in his room, young David MacLean is awakened by an inexplicable green light and a peculiar humming sound pouring in through his open window. He rushes to look outside. In awe, he witnesses a spaceship as it submerges into the very sand of the hills behind his house; an event that signifies the arrival of the

# INVADERS FROM MARS

By Robert Skotak and Scot Holton



INVADERS FROM MARS would seem to occupy a relatively minor position, relative to the total body of Menzies' work, in the minds of many film historians. The film's independent, "B" production status and science-fantasy theme has precluded its receiving any serious consideration over the years. Yet it has endured and sustained a cult following. By the 1970's, its place as a minor classic, among the major budget, major studio productions of its time, is secure.

The effectiveness of INVADERS FROM MARS' reality-cum-nightmare is a matter of very fragile considerations. It requires an extreme suspension of belief in rational thinking while divulging its fantasy premise. That the film works at all is a testimony to Menzies' spare and chilling design, taut directorial pacing, the dramatic and suspenseful underscoring of its music and credible performances. It is not a film that can tolerate much intellectual dissection; it either works **experientially** for the individual viewer, or it doesn't. The degree of paranoid "they're coming to get us and nobody will believe me" shivers it generates is largely dependent on the degree its audience is able to experience the circumstance of its central protagonist.

## the story

David (Jimmy Hunt), the young amateur scientist son of a rocket engineer, awakens one night to witness the landing of a flying saucer in the field behind the family house. His parents scoff at his claim, but George MacLean (Leif Erickson) goes out to investigate. Flashlight in hand, he walks out into the purple, early light of dawn. Celestial other-worldly voices underscore a chilling sight: a whirlpool of sand slowly opening up in the ground ahead. Seconds later, MacLean is gone.

Discovering her husband missing, Mrs. Mary MacLean (Hillary Brooke) scrutinizes the grey and melancholy field in their yard. The view is of a bleak sandhill and denuded trees through which runs a rustic fence that disappears into the horizon. It is an image that conveys fear and loneliness.

Mrs. MacLean calls the police. Officers Jackson and Blaine arrive and search the field for her husband. Suddenly MacLean appears in the doorway with a cold, unemotional expression on his face. When David spots an x-shaped scar on the back of his neck, his father knocks him to the floor!

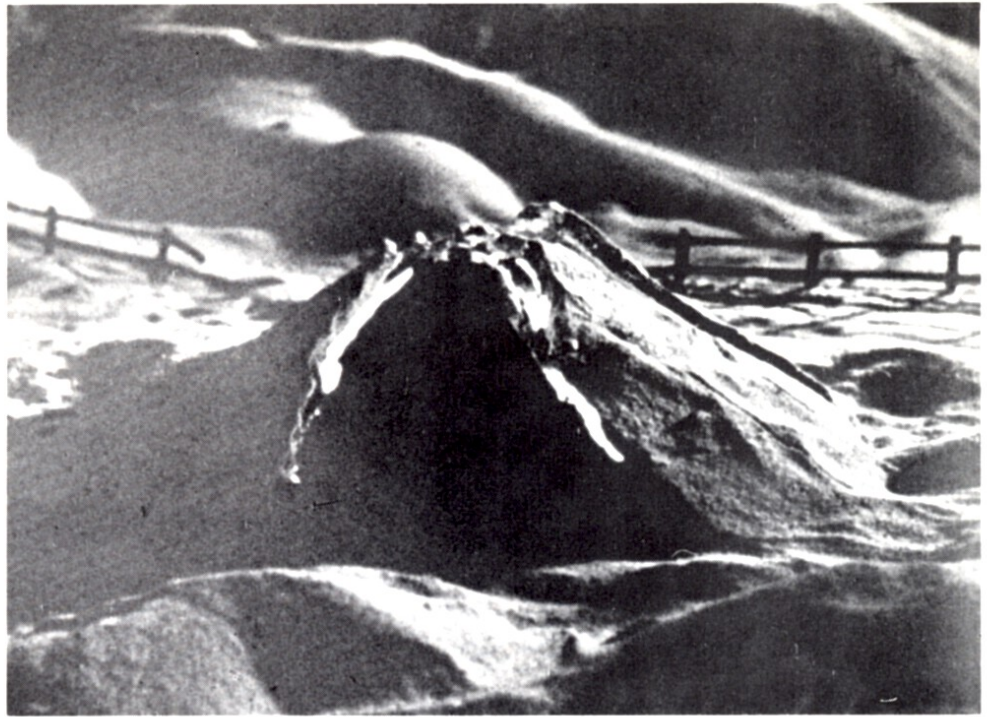
Meanwhile, the police themselves have disappeared, but return shortly afterwards to the MacLean house. They appear to be in some sort of collusion with Mr. MacLean and they too have x-scars on their necks.

Later that day David observes a neighbor, Kathy Wilson (Janine Perreau) walking along the sandhill path. Again, celestial voices are heard, and the whirlpool of sand pulls her into the earth. David races to Kathy's home and begins to relate his story to Mrs. Wilson, when the girl suddenly appears, looking strangely evil. As David leaves, he notices smoke rising from the cellar door behind the Wilsons' house. As a neighbor tries to put the fire out, Kathy just looks on, malevolent and triumphant.

Panicked, David rushes into the police station in a scene which makes use of one of Menzies' favorite devices: deep focus. He is seen running from rear-stage toward the camera down a surrealistically stark corridor toward the police sergeant's desk. A low-angle shot of the sergeant seen against a totally white background (save for a never-moving clock on the wall) suggests time is standing still as in a dream. The foreground images are boldly outlined against the wall, and the overall effect chilling in a Kafkaesque sense.

David is taken to police chief Barrows (Bert Freed), who appears menacingly cold. David observes an x-scar on his neck as well and bolts for the door. He is apprehended and brought back screaming, then locked in a cell. A psychologist, Dr. Pat Blake (Helena Carter), examines David. She seems believing of his story, especially when his parents—now both coldly detached—arrive to take David home. Dr. Blake decides to take David into her custody.

She takes him to see a mutual friend, astronomer Dr. Stuart Kelston (Arthur Franz), at his observatory. (Highly effective in mood-setting is a simple establishing shot of the Palomar dome turning slowly. Against a majestic background score by Raoul Kraushaar, it portends both mystery and awe.)



The Martian ship burrows into the sandhills behind the MacLean home.



One of the ad art concepts for INVADERS.

Kelston lends further support to David's story by theorizing the possibilities of Martian life forms trying to save themselves from extinction. They may have developed a way to preserve themselves on giant ships floating in space. They may now be further endangered by Earth rockets from the Coral Bluffs Proving Grounds invading their survival zone. The Martians could be trying to sabotage efforts there by controlling David's father (who designed the rocket assembly), and attempting to burn down the home of Kathy Wilson's father, (a physicist working on the same project).

From the observatory, Kelston trains his telescope on the area behind David's home, and the three observe Mr. MacLean leading General Mayberry, the commander of Coral Bluffs, up the path to the sand pits. Mayberry vanishes. With that, Kelston calls the Pentagon. The military is mobilized under the direction of Colonel Fielding (Morris Ankrum) and aide Sergeant Rinaldi (Max Wagner).

They discover chief Barrows is missing,

along with officers Blaine and Jackson. Orders are given to pick them up. Further investigation reveals that Kathy Wilson has inexplicably died of a brain hemorrhage. Dr. Blake hurries to the hospital.

Meanwhile, troops pour into the area around the sandhill. Rinaldi sneaks out to investigate the spot where all have disappeared and is himself sucked down screaming. Dr. Blake returns with a small crystal receiver removed from the back of Kathy's skull—a control device, they theorize, implanted by the invaders. Ultimately it can be exploded to kill its host.

At Coral Bluffs, General Mayberry and chief Barrows are gunned down near the rocket. A sentry's bullet strikes and explodes a suitcase full of nitro-glycerine they were carrying. At the Armstrong Plant, Blaine and Jackson round a corner, silhouetted in the orange flickering light of the fire they've just started. As they are apprehended by M.P.'s, their bodies convulse and fall lifelessly to the ground.

Elsewhere, Mr. and Mrs. MacLean knock





John Tucker Battle at the time of the writing of **INVADERS FROM MARS**.

|      |  |     |
|------|--|-----|
| 200. | (CONTINUED)  | 675 |
|      | BALANDI<br>DON'T struggle - there is no pain.  |     |
|      | The mutants force the helmet down over Pat's head and clamp her arms, holding her rigid. An oscillator starts in low key and begins to build higher and higher. The lights in the room dim down.   |     |
|      | OUT TOL  |     |
| 201. | NEW ANGLE - FULL SHOT - PAT.   |     |
|      | Standing in the shadow hemisphere of the spaceship facing the Martian in the plastic bell jar. As the lights grow dimmer and the oscillator increases in pitch, the bell jar glows brighter and brighter, similar to a neon tube.  |     |
|      | OUT TOL  |     |
| 202. | MED. SHOT - EXT. HILLSIDE  |     |
|      | With radio track in background, Fielding, Dr. Kelston and Dr. Blake stand in field looking toward the pasture. Just to the left of Col. Fielding, a signalman stands with a signal pistol held ready. Fielding is watching the weird hand on his wrist watch. He turns to the signalman. |     |
|      | FIELDING<br>Fire.  |     |
|      | The signalman fires a star shell.  |     |
|      | OUT TOL  |     |
| 203. | LONG SHOT - STAN SHELL EXPLODING   |     |
|      | above pasture.   |     |
|      | OUT TOL  |     |
| 204. | MED. LONG SHOT - SHERMAN TANK  |     |
|      | Starting and moving alongside of field. A hand grenade flies through an open spot, falls toward ARMA, comes to rest on the plowed field and explodes.  |     |
|      | EAP DISCLOSE TOL   |     |
| 205. | MED. SHOT - INT. SPACE SHIP - MARTIAN IN BELL JAR.   |     |
|      | The Martian's head turns sharply as a full explosion is heard OVER SCENE. The lights go up in the space ship.  |     |
|      | OUT TOL  |     |

A page from John Tucker Battle's version of **INVADERS FROM MARS**.



Distortions and exaggerations of shapes, sizes and colors typify Menzies' approach to designing the dreamworld of **INVADERS FROM MARS**.

out the guard at the Bel-Aer Magnesium Plant, the location of Dr. William Wilson's lab. The laboratory itself is shown in deep focus. Wilson is seen at the front of the image, conversing with an assistant seen at the extreme rear of the corridor behind him. Their conversation is flat and effectless; Wilson's traumatic losses seem to have taken their toll on his emotions. His emptiness is all the more effectively conveyed by the total whiteness of the setting.

Mr. MacLean locates the lab and aims a high-powered rifle up at the doctor silhouetted in the window. As Wilson stoops to pick up some papers, MacLean fires and misses. The MacLeans drive off at high speed. As two pursuing cars move in on them, their car runs off into a ditch. The two are quickly rushed to the hospital.

Back at the sandhill, night has fallen. The whole area is rimmed with searchlights that play over the hillside. Soldiers dynamite their way to the suspected underground lair of the invaders. They enter a subterranean chamber, but it proves to be sealed from any connecting tunnels. In a further attempt to pinpoint the aliens' location, the receiver removed from Kathy Wilson is connected to a frequency detector. They use it to scan the surface.

As Dr. Blake is telling David the news of his parents, they both are suddenly pulled underground. They awaken in an eerie, bulbous-walled tunnel. Before them are two giant mutants—8-foot-tall creatures clothed in green bodysuits. Only their faces are exposed—rigid, unemotional faces with bulbous, narrow-slitted eyes. The mutants carry them off into the tunnel.

Above ground, Fielding, Kelston and several soldiers finally meet with success as the detector homes in on the Martians' location. They blast their way underground. Meanwhile, below, Pat and David are carried into the spaceship itself. In the words of Richard Blake's script, the interior is "a high, fluted chamber of translucent metal. We see shadows of mutants bearing David and Pat down an exterior ramp and into the center of the room." The chamber's hue is iridescent emerald. A glassy examination table is in the center of the room, a formidable-looking, transparent shaft suspended above it.

Sergeant Rinaldi steps forward stiffly, a tell-tale scar in his neck. Before them two mutants stand beside a bizarre, disembodied head. Reposing within a glass globe, the head is highlighted in green and gold hues. Below the neck it degenerates into a vestigial torso. In place of arms are two tenacular appendages that twitch almost imperceptibly. Only its eyes move. Rinaldi explains that "he is mankind developed to its ultimate intelligence. These [the mutants] are his slaves, existing only to do his will, just as you will." David rushes at the Martian and begins pounding on the globe. Rinaldi restrains him. Pat is placed on the operating table under a hypnotic beam. Soon one of the implant devices hovers over head, descending slowly toward her neck.

The soldiers fan out through the tunnels in search of the ship. They rush in just in time to save Pat from the implant device. The soldiers activate a time bomb, then flee the spaceship. They battle the mutants with grenades back to the surface entrance, but find that their way has been sealed by the Martians' heat ray. David retrieves one of the aliens' guns. They aim it at the rock wall and fire; the wall glows deep red, then begins bubbling. Super-heated, the rock explodes, leaving an escape tunnel before them. Everyone rushes to the surface away from the hill.

The final seconds of the detonator ticking off are seen over a seemingly endless flashback montage of David's entire experience. David runs in a panic; and he, as well as time itself, never seem to move ahead. The music heightens and David's terrified face is visible against the image of the ship exploding. This slowly transforms into another image—David writhing in bed as if in a nightmare. His parents rush into his room to waken and comfort him. As David is quieted, he returns to sleep.

Later that night he is again awakened. A loud humming sound and a bright greenish glow pour into his bedroom window. David looks out to witness the saucer of his dream settling among the hills exactly as before.

Where **INVADERS FROM MARS** succeeded was in Menzies' use of carefully conceived settings which evoked states of mind and imbued simple actions with greater emotional resonances. The film's sandhill setting is a perfect



example: On the surface it is a picturesque patch of land. Subtle coloration and arrangements of leafless trees create the sense of an eternal October morning; a moment of autumnal melancholy frozen in time—straight out of the pages of Bradbury country. The peaceful landscape works to counterpoint the bizarre activities going on below, and the contrasting emotions that arise only act to magnify each other: emotional tension implied through design.

In other segments: The police station's white walls, elongated doors and spartan dressings depict the feeling of exposure and helplessness. In contrast, the observatory set calms with its purples, blues and greens. Finally, the saucer, bearing no outlines relatable to man, focuses the dream-like state. Its green is uncomfortably dark and alien. A hole in the floor serves no identifiable purpose. The ship's mode of operation, irrationally, seemingly doesn't exist. Disharmonies and shifting of moods like these occur in the kind of "rational" disorder we accept only in our dreams. Menzies' deliberate design of these elements into the story are what converts a straightforward adventure into a highly subjective experience.

## reviewers' comments

While the experiential nature of the film is probably the underlying reason for its having lasted, it is and was generally just viewed as a competent, commercial product; and at most, possibly a bit more imaginative than the run-of-the-mill science fiction production.

The following review excerpts typified the critical reaction to the film on a mass-appeal level upon its release:

"This science-fiction number...is an extremely imaginative piece of work, particularly in Menzies' dreamed-up version of what the men from Mars look like in their space ships. In his direction, he plays it for just about all the suspense any of us earthbound creatures can take. The special effects, the art direction and the music contribute to make this production of Edward L. Alperson a suspensefully entertaining piece of fantasy."

Lynn Bowers, **L.A. Examiner**

"Everyone in the cast plays it all very seriously. Richard Blake wrote the dilly of a script. The production is very effectively designed and directed by William Cameron Menzies."

Marie Mesmer, **L.A. News**

"Although special effects and technical credits are the star performers of the picture, the cast also turns in creditable portrayals under Menzies' fine direction. Both producer Alperson and son Edward Jr., who served as associate producer, have extracted maximum physical values from what appears to be a medium budget. Director Menzies' design of the production is warmly inventive as is the art direction of Boris Leven."

**Variety** review

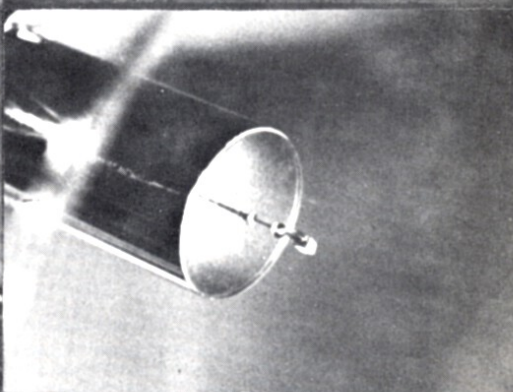
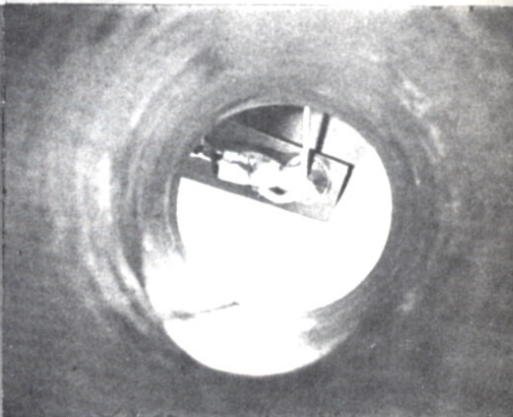
"The tale is weird and terrifying, but well-done with realistic direction and exceptional color. Each member of the cast gives a convincing portrayal, and the audience is almost frozen with fear until the finale is reached. This is entirely too terrifying and realistic a picture for children."

**Southern California Motion Picture Council**

"A suspenseful action thriller, fantastic and incredible as it is storywise."

**Hollywood Citizen News**

Left column: 1. Sgt. Rinaldi (Max Wagner) is pulled below the swirling sands behind David's house. 2. The sand hole fills up again after a victim has been pulled under. 3. The Martians' control device. 4. Captain Roth (Milburn Stone) straps on the crystal receiver to aid in locating David and Dr. Blake. 5. Soldiers converge on the spot where David and Dr. Blake disappeared. Right column: 1. The soldiers blast an entranceway to the Martians' tunnels. 2. Dr. Kelston (Arthur Franz) peers down from the upper level of the saucer to the floor below. 3. At the end of the circular chute they see Dr. Blake's body on the operating table. 4. The crystal-implanting nozzle, designed by Menzies and art director Boris Leven. 6. Jack Rabin's optical work combining the Martian Intelligence with the saucer background.







Kathy Wilson (Janine Perreau) stares blandly after setting her house on fire. Note the edge of the backdrop.



David is protected by Dr. Pat Blake (Helena Carter) from his parents (Leif Erickson and Hillary Brooke) as sargeant Finley (Walter Sande) looks on.



October 7, 1952: Filming the sequence of David pointing out the area where the ship has landed. Rooftop itself was a small unit on rollers positioned in front of a portion of the sandhill cyclorama.



Kelston, David, Major Cleary (William Phipps), Colonel Fielding (Morris Ankrum) and Captain Roth turn to hear an unearthly sound coming from the sandhill as Sgt. Rinaldi disappears.

"It is an exciting thriller that will have the science-fiction addicts on the edge of their seats a good deal of the time with its suspenseful story. Menzies has used a vivid imagination, spacing out the dramatic punches at effective intervals and saving a strong kicker for the finish...the musical score by Raoul Kraushaar fits the mood and tempo of the picture nicely."

Hollywood Reporter

"Menzies designed and directed the production, and certainly much of the film's success can be credited to him. The settings and his conception of space paraphernalia are very imaginative and his direction too is of the best, especially in the latter moments when the action moves at a feverish pace."

Variety review followup

## the screenplay

The very beginnings of the film can be traced to a time long before the cast and crew reported for its production at Republic Studios. Decades earlier, its creation was sparked by the nightmare of a young girl; and later inspired by the rolling hills in California's San Fernando Valley. From disparate sources as these a fantastic story grew, developed by a uniquely

imaginative screenwriter. Ironically, this writer—the true author of *INVADERS FROM MARS*—has never been identified with the film. His name: John Tucker Battle.

The Virginia-born Battle traveled to New York early in his career and there became a producer for Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre. Later both he and his wife Rosemary handled production on Welles' live magic show, with Rosemary also doubling as a performer. Battle was 48 years old when in early 1950 he sat down to write the now familiar *INVADERS FROM MARS*. Behind the author already were screenwriting credits that included *IRISH EYES ARE SMILING* (1944) and Disney's *SO DEAR TO MY HEART* (1948). Ahead of him lay *THE FROGMEN* (1951), an early treatment of *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA*, and numerous other motion picture and television credits.

Both Battles harbored a life-long fascination for science-fiction subjects. They read all the periodicals then available devoted to the fantastic—*Amazing Stories*, John W. Campbell's *Astounding Science-Fiction* and the like. Often they'd sit on their porch at night and turn their imaginations to the star-strewn heavens and hillsides near their home in Encino. For fun they wondered, according to Rosemary Roberts (the former Mrs. Battle), "What if a UFO went down in the hills and if these creatures began living down there in the ground? Just imagine what would happen! It was purely a flight of

fantasy, but we loved the idea."

As the Battles contemplated the idea, a story began to take shape. When an inspiration caught fire, John Battle began forming their collective imaginations into a motion picture script. The nearby hills became the natural starting point of their narrative. They, of course, immediately needed a central character, a witness to the landing of the space visitors. A real-life inspiration was right at hand: In Mrs. Roberts' words, "The David character in the script was inspired by John's nephew, David Shumway. His father was a commander in the Navy and had been killed in the war. David and his mother lived on our place. We had a big telescope mounted by the swimming pool. David was fascinated with it and uncle and nephew spent a lot of time looking at the stars." In the screenplay, David is an amateur scientist fascinated by astronomy. Drawing further from real life, the Battles used their own names—John and Rosemary (shortened to Mary)—as the parents' names.

The concept of the invaders turning people into unfeeling automatons stemmed from a frightening dream of Rosemary's childhood: "I had a nightmare wherein I ran to my mother, but my mother *wasn't* my mother! That wasn't my own mother depicted in the story, but that's where the idea came from. The mother is the boy's security, and it was taken away from him. After all, what could be more frightening than





Officers Blaine and Jackson are surrounded by M.P.'s after setting fire to the Armstrong Plant.



Dr. William Wilson (Robert Shayne) declares to Brainard (Peter Brocco) that "we must go on," in spite of his daughter's recent death. To cut production costs, this set was merely a re-dressed, re-painted version of the police station set pictured on the opposite page.

to have your own mother turn against you?"

Throughout the writing, Rosemary assisted her husband, frequently acting as his sounding board. An artist in her own right, she helped visualize numerous story points: "I made quite a number of sketches and doodles to illustrate the story and what these creatures looked like. One idea I had for these space beings was of bat-like creatures—really awful, nasty things." This idea was ultimately replaced by the concept of mole-like giants. Much of their research for the story originated in their science-fiction readings and John's familiarity with astronomy.

"FADE OUT on stars from Milky Way that fill the screen with spangled light as the score builds to a crescendo." These words were tapped out on Battle's typewriter a scant three-and-a-half weeks later. The preliminary 96-page screenplay, simply called "The Invaders," was complete.

Considering the various rewrites the story underwent in the next two-and-a-half years, a look at its earliest ideas and subsequent evolution is quite interesting: In all of the at least four stages of revision (the first two by Battle; the second two by Menzies and Richard Blake) the basic story, save for the ending, never drastically changed, although many details were added and deleted.

In Battle's very first treatment, David MacLean looks through his window not to see a flying saucer, but "a swiftly descending ball of brilliant white fire as it sweeps down out of the heavens, hovers for a moment and drops behind an adjacent hill." Battle's second version introduced a pet for David (a dog named Cricket) who accompanies him through much of the story.

This second version also elaborated on the moments just after David spots the landing of the ship: He crawls out his window followed by Cricket, and wanders out toward the landing area. The dog begins to growl. Looking off into the night, "David sees a brilliant white light glow suddenly in the distance. It casts a gigantic black shadow of a thing that could be a man against the flank of the dark hill. The light goes out suddenly and a strange humming sound fills the air." He runs into the house and awakens his skeptical parents.

In both of Battle's treatments the invaders' first victim is not David's father but their cow, Blossom. It is the cow's mournful bellowing that first suggests something strange is going on out back. In checking on the animal, John MacLean became the first human victim of the aliens.

The idea of a tell-tale neck scar left by Martian implant surgery does not appear in Battle's earliest version. Victims of the Martians have scraped, torn or bloody ankles, socks and shoes instead as a result of their having been grabbed by their feet and yanked into underground hatches by the aliens. The implant surgery appeared in the second treatment leaving "livid red scars the size of a quarter above the nape of the neck." These scars became tiny red x's in the Menzies-Blake

final script.

Battle indicated the Martians would surface through a trap-door, described as being "a circular, 4-foot section of earth. It rises about 6 inches, revealing an indistinct shape that moves as though someone or something were peering out of the crack." When it shuts, a flap of earth closes back over the hole. An unearthly humming sound always accompanies their preparations to surface.

Interestingly the first concept depicted an attempt at all-out invasion of Earth. Later revisions by Battle, Menzies and Blake scaled the story down to suggest that the Martians' presence on Earth was an attempt to halt experimental rocket launchings that were endangering their race. One grandiose concept Battle envisioned was that of "space ships 60 miles in diameter, flying at an altitude of between 90 and 200 miles at speeds estimated at 43,000 miles per hour." The ship in David's backyard is then but a scout ship sent from this mother craft in space.

Battle's premise further indicated a subterranean civilization on Mars. He fittingly conceived hairy, mole-like mutations developed and telepathically controlled by a higher race of beings to do physical work. The mutants in his script are perfectly adapted for tunnel digging and dwelling. They are equipped with suction-cupped feet that enable them to walk up 90-degree inclines.

The invaders' ship had a functional logic as originally pictured by John and Rosemary Battle: "The central area is a circular room some 20 feet in diameter, approximately 15 feet high. It is composed of a shiny substance similar to polished aluminum. The only rivets in evidence mark the outlines of bulkheads spaced around the perimeter of the walls. Upper left, near the spiral steel staircase, a low metal table is near the wall. It is flanked by two stationary metal benches. To the right of the table the half carcass of a cow hangs on an iron hook. [The MacLean's cow, Blossom, was quickly eradicated from appearing in the saucer in the next rewrite!] The room is dome-like in structure, and an area 12 feet in diameter and approximately 8 feet in height occupies the apex of the dome, which is made of a transparent plastic substance. This is the control tower of the space ship. A bank of control panels is placed in this structure and a round cushioned pilot's seat is suspended on a cross walk of perforated metal girders. The room is illuminated by a series of circular lights which look like portholes."

The Martians themselves, Battle hypothesized, were a race of beings whose advanced intelligence resulted in enlarged craniums and atrophied, immobile bodies: "A mutant backs out of the bulkhead carrying a Martian on a circular metal tray which is surmounted by a plastic bell jar... a mutant steps forward quickly and places a circular metal drum approximately 3 feet in diameter and 30 inches in height in the center of the floor... the other two mutants then place the Martian on the drum, step back, and assume an attitude of

attention. TRUCK IN to CLOSE SHOT of the Martian. He is approximately 30 inches in height, dressed in a singlet that resembles soft chain mail. Over this is a gorget of soft black material similar to velvet. He is seated tailor fashion on a circular cushion resembling sponge rubber. He is extremely brontocephalic, and his tremendously large skull is completely devoid of hair. His eyes are small and deep set and peer from their dark sockets with a strange, ophidian lustre. He is entirely covered by the plastic bell jar, and sits so unmoving that he appears to be a wax figure until we are suddenly aware of the eyes moving to the right, then to the left, then down where he focuses on Pat." (The Martian's appearance, coupled with Battle's description of the space ship's interior, can be traced to imagery in artist Wessolowski's illustration for Oliver Saari's story "Two Sane Men" which appeared in the June, 1937 issue of *Astounding Science-Fiction*. Elliot Dold's illustration for Harry Bates' "Alas, All Thinking" depicts a similar unmoving, brontocephalic intelligence.)

The Battles came up with two different endings for their story, both of which differed radically from the film's "its-all-in-a-dream" denouement. The earlier ending suggests an almost WAR OF THE WORLDS epic sweep:

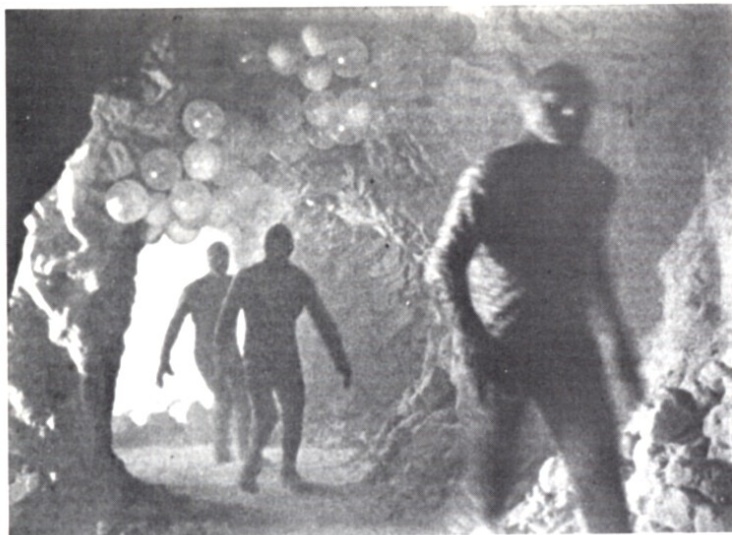
Colonel Fielding and his troops narrowly succeed in rescuing Pat and David from the saucer. Under onslaught of the Martians' superior heat ray they all escape, though they have not destroyed the ship.

The next day in a conference room of the Secretary of War, plans are outlined to destroy the menace. The FBI issues a general alarm seeking to put people suspected of "contamination" (i.e., Martian-controlled) in protective custody. A series of scenes follows detailing the subversive activities of the Martian's operatives: John MacLean sabotages a train trestle. The train jumps track at high speed and crashes into a deep gorge. Elsewhere, Sergeant Jackson sets off a gigantic explosion in a harbor, and docks, ships and oil tanks go up in flames. Then, "Jackson—his face lighted by the flames of the burning oil tanks—suddenly raises his eyes, stands at attention and places his right hand on his heart." He gazes into the sky at the glowing pinpoint light of Mars in the heavens. In another vignette, police chief Barrows sends a package by air mail and watches as his time-bomb special delivery explodes the DC-6 carrying it.

Back at the sandhill, Colonel Fielding continues to shell the entire area. The field is reduced to a mass of craters. Aerial photographs reveal the futility of their efforts; the Martians' tunnels are clearly visible through the gaping holes, but their activities still continue. They theorize the aliens have burrowed deeper into the earth. A sonic detector plane is dispatched. Its findings indicate the ship has buried itself at the unreachable depth of 150 feet!

A sand-bagged press tent has gone up around the field, and newscasters from the world over broadcast news of impending failure. A special session of the Congress is called in which it is decided the A-bomb will be used.





The mutant slaves lope through the maze of tunnels. These scenes, which were repeated up to three times in the film, employed four normal-sized extras, not giants, as the mutants.



The mutants prepare to use the heat ray.

The message flashes around the world...in France...in China...and in Times Square at night.

"The roads of Central City," a radio commentator announces, "are choked with a constant stream of traffic as men, women, children and animals are being evacuated from the area." A montage follows of crowds evacuating by bus, truck and railroad, until only a lifeless city remains.

From the sun room of a hospital 40 miles away, nurse Pat Collins, David, Dr. Kelston and Dr. Blake peer through dark glasses awaiting the dropping of the nuclear warhead. Seconds later, the blinding white blast at last destroys the invaders.

Against a series of images of people from every nation, an address given by the President is heard: "Let us never forget that we stand today upon the threshold of a new era—an era that can mean our death and destruction, or the birth of a new civilization...A civilization in which the entire human race will unite against the threat of invasion from a common enemy...an enemy of alien beings from a dark and distant planet. And, my friends, if this dark cloud of universal peril cannot banish our selfishness and bigotry and suspicion of our fellow man, then we are—and deservedly—doomed."

A friend of the Battles read the script. He knew of someone he felt would be interested in it. He passed it into the hands of Arthur Gardner, vice-president and secretary of Allart Pictures Corporation, who brought it to the immediate attention of the company's president, Edward L. Alpers, Sr. Though he had reservations about the script, Alpers found it full of possibilities—especially since a science-fiction boom was coming into full swing with the success of films like *DESTINATION MOON* and *THE MAN FROM PLANET X*.

Alpers set up several meetings with the Battles at his office. John fully discussed all aspects of the realization of his project. He felt the film could be inexpensively shot in black and white, suggesting the use of tints (green for the tunnel scenes, red for the atomic blast, etc.) to create an impression of color. Since he often hobbled with special effects technicians, he'd figured out the means to physically achieve the ideas in his story: The heat ray, used by the mutants, caused the cave walls to glow phosphorescently. Battle explained that a substance called "water glass" could be sprayed onto cellophane to create the glass surface of the tunnel walls. The glowing effect could be created by backlighting the surface with hot arcs.

In a number of scenes the mutants burn holes through cave walls and ceilings and even melt a tank passing overhead. This sequence is described in his script: "As the flame from the atomic disintegrator burns a circular hole, the edges drip with molten silica, like wax under the flame of a blow torch." Battle outlined how this effect could be created with a military flame-thrower "burning away a wax-covered flimsy." He further explained that scenes of the tanks melting would actually be miniatures cast

from a Sherman tank scale model in sarabin metal, which melts at 150 degrees F.

By late summer of 1950 they'd discussed these ideas, a number of small changes and a new ending. Battle immediately went to work on it. On September 5, he turned in his revised draft. It tightened the action, telescoped events and featured the radically altered ending: In this version soldiers kill a number of the mutants and place a powerful time bomb in the ship before fleeing. Two mutants escape down one of the tunnels carrying the Martian Intelligence to safety.

David, meanwhile, is lost. He comes to a dead end beneath one of the Martian trapdoors. With only minutes left before detonation of the nearby bomb, he frantically begins digging his way out with his hands, then his belt buckle. An army jeep pulls up just as David claws his way to the surface. He is plucked off the ground and whisked away by the soldiers moments before a gigantic blast demolishes the space ship.

As the dust clears, two mutants bearing the Intelligence emerge from a distant trap door and hide in the hills. They watch as Colonel Fielding and his men examine parts of the wreckage. Fielding studies a piece of equipment resembling a high-altitude anaroid. David wanders off exploring the debris. Unknown to him, he is dangerously near the hiding mutants. Abruptly he is called away from the area by Fielding.

Later at his Aunt Margaret's house, David is reunited with his dog and told that his parents have been successfully operated upon. David is taken home and put to bed.

Atop a nearby ridge, the two mutants are adjusting a radio-like device. Its antennae begins to emit violet sparks. Just then Cricket's growling awakens David in time to see a glowing light descend near the hill. He peers through his telescope and witnesses, according to Battle's script, "a round bulkhead opening in a section of a space ship seen through a screen of heavy bushes and trees. The silhouette of the two mutants carrying the Martian in his plastic dome enters scene and goes through the bulkhead, which closes behind them. Then the scene is burned out by a blinding white light....The ball of white fire ascends swiftly and dies away in the distance."

Battle felt his screenplay would meet with the satisfaction of all concerned.

But it didn't.

## pre-production

Alpers, trained in the practical world of business, apparently felt uneasy about some of the film's fantasy elements as well as the economics involved in translating them to the screen. As a result, although he'd purchased the Battle screenplay in late 1950, it would be a full two years before physical production on it began.

"My father's background went back to before World War I," explained Edward Alpers Jr., "When he was a kid he delivered film in a

wagon and then in Omaha, when the war was over, he became a film salesman. He operated through the Midwest. In 1935 he formed Grand National Pictures, which was the old Eagle-Lion Studios—he built that from scratch. He later went back to being a film buyer for Fox. In 1941 he returned to New York and became chief buyer for RKO Theatres, and four months later became their manager.

"He was a fabulous film salesman, a fabulous exhibitor. For instance, it sounds corny, but remember *FANTASIA*? Well, when that picture came out he came up with an ad campaign which is the corniest line in the world; but it sold like hotcakes. It was simply, 'FANTASIA will amaze-yeh!'"

Operating from his Beverly Hills home office, the senior Alpers had acted as producer for a number of films, such as *TENDER YEARS*, *BLACK BEAUTY*, *DAKOTA LIL*, *SWORD OF MONTE CRISTO* and *ROSE OF CIMARRON*. "He was not a creative man from the standpoint of artistic creativity," according to Alpers Jr. "He would come up with a basic idea. He knew how to sell a piece of celluloid though. His role on *INVADERS FROM MARS* was executive producer. I was 27 years old at the time and was associate producer. I met John Battle, but I never had any direct dealings with him because he was out of the picture when Richard Blake and Menzies were brought in."

Blake, whose previous credits included *WOMEN ARE TROUBLE* (MGM, 1936) and *THE CROOKED ROAD* (Republic, 1940), knew how to write with a restrictive budget in mind. For that reason, Alpers Sr. had commissioned him to economize Battle's script. After several discussions with Alpers, Blake made a number of changes: He combined Battle's two characters, Dr. James Blake and nurse Pat Collins, into one; Dr. Pat Blake. The dog Cricket, David's Aunt Margaret and several minor characters were eliminated. Several scenes, and the required sets, including a mental hospital David is taken to and his Aunt's house, were also eliminated. All relatively minor changes.

But then there was the ending. Alpers simply was not satisfied with it. It was eventually decided that David's entire weird adventure was to be no more than a bad dream. Blake rewrote the conclusion from the point of the escape from the invaders' tunnels. All previous ending ideas considered were dropped from the script.

John Battle was involved in other projects when he learned of that particular change. His temper flared. "John thought of the story as a factual thing, something that actually happened—not a dream," Mrs. Roberts recalled. "When he heard what they'd done to his story, he blew up. He was in a tizzy. He told them to take his name off of it, and they did. He was so upset he refused to see the film. He never saw it. And, of course, I didn't either. It was a matter of integrity with him." As events had it, however, the Battles could never put the film completely out of their minds. As a perhaps unfortunate inside joke, they'd included their own phone number in the script (the number David dials to call the observatory.) Consequently,

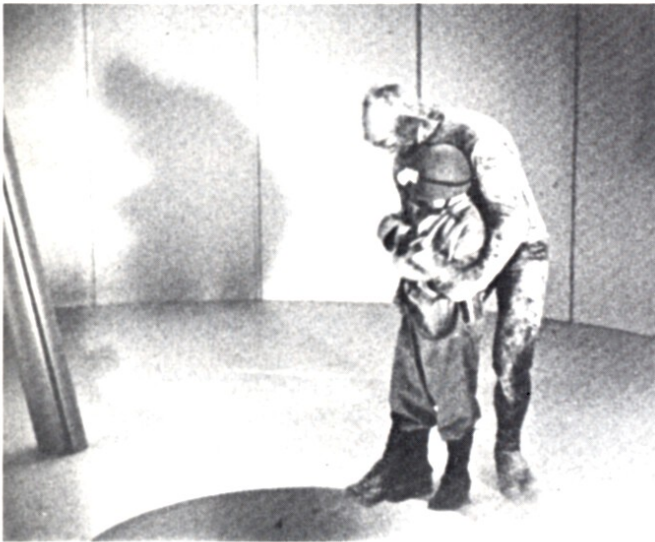




Soldiers blast a mutant guard with rifles and machine guns.



The dream-like atmosphere is enhanced by the deliberate absence of practical details, typified by this view of the instrumentless space ship set.



For several stunt scenes—such as this one in which a mutant is about to drag a soldier into a chute in the floor—midgets were used with normal-sized actors as the "giants."



Dr. Blake struggles as the mutant slaves prepare to operate on her.

every time the film appeared on TV their phone rang incessantly from curious viewers calling to see if the number was real.

By the beginning of 1952, Alpersen began receiving added incentive to start production on the property. Science-fiction films of all types were in release and doing extremely well. Many others were in production. At Monogram, Walter Mirisch was planning *VOYAGE TO VENUS*, a sequel to his profitable *FLIGHT TO MARS*. Lippert Productions announced *MISS 21ST CENTURY*. United Artists had *MIRACLES FROM MARS*, later re-titled *RED PLANET MARS*, for release. The success of Arch Oboler's *FIVE* encouraged him to release *THE TWONKY* upon the world. But best of all, great interest was being generated in the idea of an invasion from Mars due to the publicity stirred by the George Pal-Byron Haskin production of *WAR OF THE WORLDS* at Paramount. The time was right for an *INVADERS FROM MARS*.

Some preliminary groundwork had been laid. Alpersen already had Helena Carter and Douglas Kennedy lined up for parts in the film. On January 25, 1952, Alpersen reported his intent to start shooting in April. He followed up initial informal discussions with William Cameron Menzies by gaining the famous designer's agreement to work on the picture—a major asset. April came and went, but the production still wasn't ready to shoot. Ben Chapman, credited as assistant director in *INVADERS FROM MARS*, was to be the film's production manager. He proceeded to round up and organize the needs of the production, locating sources of stock footage and the where-

abouts of a couple of giants to play the mutants.

The financing behind *INVADERS* was set up similar to earlier Alpersen productions. "Our deal was that we financed the picture through our own corporation," recalled Alpersen Jr. "We even financed our own prints. We would supply all the prints to 20th Century-Fox. They ordered them, but we paid for them. We got charged for the advertising material and everything else. For that we got a 25 percent distribution deal, so it was to our advantage to do it that way as long as the picture was successful."

Menzies officially began working on *INVADERS FROM MARS* in July. Alone in his small study above his garage, he carefully studied the Battle script and Blake's preliminary revision. The scripts excited him. He'd always enjoyed working on films with a fantasy content and here was a project full of imagination and fit for his talents. Through a series of thumbnail sketches he developed initial production design concepts: He simplified all set details, adopting a stark, "empty space" look. This style at once kept production costs low and at the same time provided for an appropriately dream-like quality.

Menzies' next finalized his ideas in charcoal, filling up twelve notebooks with large, detailed drawings, many of them highlighted in red tones. These drawings represented every set and every scene in the film. Above each drawing he wrote the scene number, angles and technical requirements. Richard Blake then studied Menzies' visual concepts and incorporated descriptions of them into the screenplay

as he finalized it. Menzies also produced numerous rough little sketches of the various props and set pieces required for the story. These later went to the art director assigned to the production to be further refined.

Since the use of 3-D was being discussed during meetings, Menzies composed his storyboards with an emphasis on a quality of depth. Edward Alpersen Jr. explained: "It was discussed to shoot *INVADERS* in 3-D, but 3-D at that stage of the game... the technology really wasn't there and it wouldn't have been feasible. I don't think 3-D would have been that effective."

Although the idea of shooting in stereo was dropped, Menzies continued to follow through with the mental concepts he'd envisioned for the process. (Not surprisingly, the film has long been rumored to have been actually shot in the 3-D process. An attempt *was* made, upon the film's release in England, to synthetically create the 3-dimensional effect by simultaneously projecting two aligned, polarized prints, slightly out of synchronization.)

Among the more novel ideas Menzies developed were the bubble-like spheroids that hung like clustered pearls throughout the Martian tunnels. This idea harkened back to a concept he had sketched as early as the 1920's. Only in *INVADERS* was he able to incorporate the image as a logical outgrowth of the story; the bubbles representing the heat-blistering of silica in the rock when subjected to the heat ray.

Creating the mutants presented a number of problems. Menzies considered the Battles' con-



cept: "The mutants are humanoid in appearance but are covered with coarse, black hair.... Their feet are about twice the length of human feet and the soles are equipped with natural spongy vacuum cups. The four toes of each foot terminate in heavy, black digging claws. A hairless, snout-like nose, similar to a mole's, protrudes from the front of the face. They are without ears, and beady-like reflecting eyes look out from the hairy mask of a face. At no time do they utter any sound, for these creatures are telepathic. When they walk or run, there is a slurping sound as the vacuum cups on their feet break contact with the smooth, glassy surface of the tunnel.... The fingers are equipped with black, non-retractable digging claws." To achieve this, Battle suggested the actors would be wearing head-to-toe flocked, baggy tights.

Menzies, however, drew creatures that indicated a higher evolution. They dug their way through tunnels with a heat ray, so there was no need for digging claws. Their eyes, accustomed to underground darkness, were tiny. Their simplified appearance, in his drawings, were described by Blake in his revision as "fearsome, almost naked creatures with grotesquely matted torsos and monstrous, vacant faces."

The Martians' heat-ray gun design was also re-worked by Menzies and was far removed from John Battle's original description: "Two mutants emerge from a side tunnel carrying a machine mounted on a metal stretcher-like base. The machine resembles a large searchlight with a metal megaphone-shaped device fastened to the front of the lens. Two heavy insulators stand vertically just behind the searchlight part of the machine and they are connected to a thing that looks like a small condenser by two 3-inch copper ribbons." In redesigning the device, Menzies stripped away everything recognizable as a product of Earth technology (i.e., condensers, insulators), resulting in the final, flashlight-like contours.

Meanwhile, the Alpersons had decided to rent space at the inexpensive—and poorly equipped—Republic Studios in the San Fernando Valley. To help cut costs elsewhere, production manager Ben Chapman secured "military aid." According to Alpersen Jr., "We received a certain amount of army cooperation. We got tanks, bazookas and other implements from the army dept. out of Long Beach. They also provided film as a public service. We sent them a copy of the script, they approved it and supplied us with the stock footage. We paid for the printing costs."

Menzies completed his drawings near the beginning of September. Richard Blake then finalized all aspects of his screenplay, turning in the last 22 revised pages on September 17—just a little over a week before filming was to begin.

Once the script was approved by Alpersen, it was immediately turned over to the script supervisor, Mary Yerke, who was assigned to the picture from the production staff at Republic. For the next week she busied herself with the task of breaking the film down into general sequences, day and night sequences, etc. She also prepared the wardrobe plot sheets for Olive Konitz and Gene Martin of the wardrobe department.

Earlier in September, staff art director Boris Leven found *INVADERS FROM MARS* on his production agenda for the month. Leven, who had previously designed *DONOVAN'S BRAIN*, went on in later years to win awards for his work on films like *WEST SIDE STORY*, *THE SAND PEBBLES*, *SOUND OF MUSIC*, *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN*, and *NEW YORK, NEW YORK*.

"Menzies was overseeing the entire production," Leven recalled. "All his thinking and training was along the lines of art direction. He'd made quite a few little drawings and sketches of his ideas as he was developing them, and then I came onto the picture. I knew Bill not terribly long, but we became quite friendly and I tried to carry out his ideas as much as I could."

"We tried to keep the design as simple as possible in the interior of the saucer—very simple and uncluttered. It was really tough to make this film because it was done on such a shoestring budget. Occasionally we had to give up ideas because of the cost. Yet its effective due to the clever design."

"Bill was a great designer and loved to talk and reminisce. I used to try and get him out of the office because I couldn't work. He'd sit there and smoke and reminisce about England



Art director Boris Leven.

—a very colorful and interesting man. So... what I did was take his ideas, his sketches, and really develop them into full-sized, actual things. The most important thing is the idea, but the next important thing is to achieve it with materials."

Leven experimented with materials that had not yet been used to any great extent in motion pictures, including fiberglass and plexiglass. It was his job to decide on what was to be used in constructing the blistered cave walls, ray-guns, and so forth. Through Leven, Menzies' prop and set illustrations were finalized.

From Leven's practical drawings miniature cardboard models representing the sets were built to guide in their full-sized construction. Detailed blueprints were drawn up in the art department and sent to the various other departments.

In the weeks prior to production, the special effects department, under the supervision of the famous Lydecker brothers, Howard and Theodore, busied itself building the requisite props. According to Theodore Lydecker, "These independent companies would come in—'lend-lease' we'd call it—and they'd bring their own crew, but they also had to use some of Republic's crew. They needed our knowledge, which the independent companies didn't have."

"On *INVADERS FROM MARS* we were sent a script which was submitted to me for budget. I made it up and turned it in. They analyzed the budget and sent it to Alpersen for approval. Leven would come to me with the storyboards, and his own designs. Most of the time on a 'cost-plus' picture like this was, we had to constantly revise the budget. Boris would come up with different ideas than the producer. They wanted to make this for as little cost as possible, which is one reason Alpersen brought in Chapman—because he was a good budgeteer. They'd see \$1,000 for a special effect, then they'd scratch it out because it was too much. Then they'd find out they needed it and try to get it as cheap as they could."

The Martian Intelligence was created in the effects shop: A bulging headpiece and a truncated torso equipped with pliable, three-fingered tentacles was cast in rubber from a clay sculpture—these to be worn by the actor playing the Martian. A sculptor then rendered the entire figure in clay. From that a plaster cast was made, which was intended for use in far shots.

In the metal shop the streamlined, 4-foot-long ray gun was constructed. Beneath its honeycombed, plexiglass front, studio electricians Paul Guerin and Jimmy Phillips installed a car headlight powered by a series of strong batteries. A rheostat was built into the heavy metal body, enabling the actors to control the light's intensity independent of power cables.

In the construction department, veteran Ralph Oberg and his crew were assembling the 15 sets made for the production. (Several additional sets were created by re-dressing a few of the original group of sets.) Standing tunnel sets were re-plastered and fitted with newly cast sections approximating the blister effect in Menzies' drawings.

Independent of the activities at the studio, a long-time friend of the Alpersen family, Norma Koch, was commissioned to make the costumes worn by the mutants. Norma, whose previous film credits as a costume designer

included *DEADLY IS THE FEMALE* (United Artists, 1949) and special creations for *TARZAN AND THE MERMAIDS* (RKO, 1948), was hampered in her work on *INVADERS* by the tight budget. Menzies' concepts were simplified further. No longer were they covered in hair. Instead she made full body uniforms out of green velour, constructed in two pieces. The feet were enlarged and terminated in two large toes, padded with foam rubber. She "alienized" the costume further by creating three-fingered hands, also padded. She made large costumes for the two "giants" that had been cast to play the mutants in a number of scenes. Four smaller versions were made to be worn by normal-sized extras who were to play the mutants in other scenes. Duplicates were made in case of accidental damage.

During this time the remainder of the cast signed on to the film: Helena Carter on September 19, Hillary Brooke, September 23. John Archer—one of the leads in *DESTINATION MOON*—was contracted for the role of Dr. Stuart Kelston.

On Tuesday, September 24, an unfortunate incident took place that had a telling effect on the production: Mary Yerke was finishing her breakdown of the script. Her task had been aided in part by Menzies' storyboards. "When I first saw all the drawings," she commented, "I thought, 'this is great, this is going to be a real help to me throughout the shooting.' *INVADERS FROM MARS* was the first and only picture I've ever worked on that was storyboarded every step of the way. I met Menzies the day before shooting began. One of the first things I asked him was where his drawings were—I needed them for reference. He thought that I'd had them, and of course I didn't. And apparently nobody else had seen them all morning."

"We searched all over. They were in the production office the night before but now they were all gone. Menzies was heartbroken. He'd planned to direct the picture using the drawings. Without them he had a difficult time."

## the production

By 8 a.m. on Wednesday, September 25, 1952, the cast and crew began reporting for actual filming. They assembled on the first stage—the big Mabel Normand stage inside the studio gates just behind the sound studio. On that same day, Arthur Franz signed for the last-minute role of Dr. Kelston, replacing John Archer.

A maze of sets had been erected on the Normand stage. Two of Menzies' key sets dominated overall: The sandhill and the saucer interior. The hill took up an entire corner of the stage and was supported from below by 12-foot-high wooden scaffolding atop which canvas was stretched. Tons of white sand had been spread over much of its surface. Several large, bare trees stood about braced from above by guide wires.

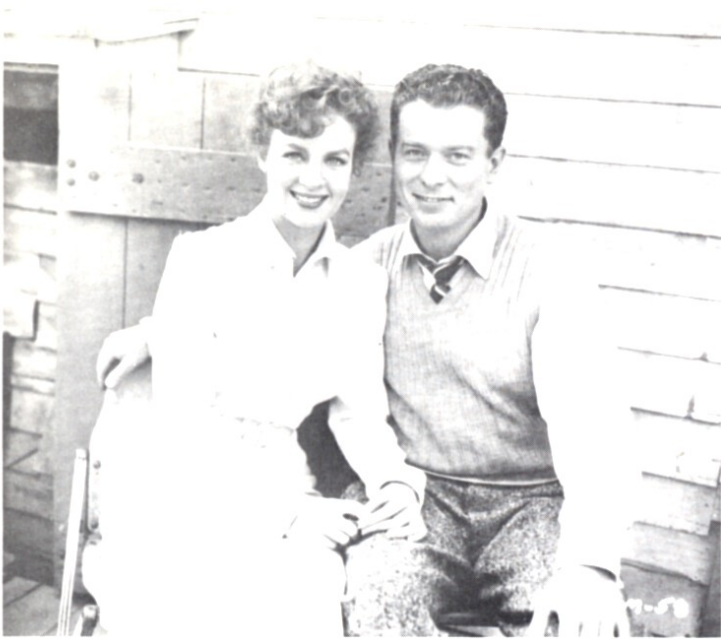
Closely adjoining the sandhill set rested the saucer interior. It stood erect in a two-thirds cylinder shape around a 28-foot wide circular platform raised 4 feet above the stage floor by supports. The "fluted chamber" walls consisted of twelve 5-foot-wide and 22-foot-tall concaved sheets of green-hued fiberglass. The sheets, fastened together lengthwise, hung like a giant curtain from cables attached to the ceilings' supports.

In a box next to the set lay the globe-encased Martian Intelligence, left there with seemingly about as much significance as a studio spotlight. Even then it radiated a peculiar alien quality under the green light cast through the saucer walls.

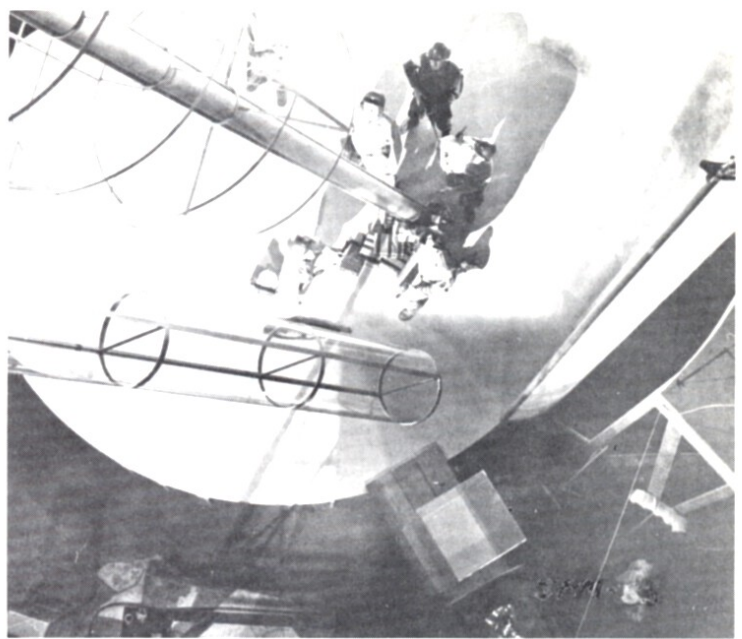
The rest of the studio floor was occupied by sets representing cozy bedrooms, a living room, the stark police station and adjoining office, a gas station, Dr. Kelston's observatory, a neighborhood backyard, several front porches and miscellaneous flats and backdrops. The tunnel sets were the only interiors not to be shot on this stage.

It was considered a little unusual that a major talent like Menzies would be directing a film at Republic. *INVADERS FROM MARS* was one of the bigger films shot at Republic in some time. If it was not a high budget picture, there was at least no obvious penny-pinching going on. Menzies was given full assistance and all backup facilities were put at his disposal. Five extra grips, a laborer, a green (stu-





Between takes: Helena Carter and Arthur Franz.



A view of the main floor space ship set.

dio man specializing in handling plants), a painter, and extra electricians augmented the already full crew working on the production.

Among those taking their places in front of the camera were:

Helen Carter, a beautiful redhead who signed to play Dr. Pat Blake. The New York-born actress had spent her childhood in Kerry, Ireland, but returned to the U.S. where she graduated from New York's Hunt College. The one-time model had recently completed roles in *TIME OUT OF MIND*, *KISS TOM GOODBYE* and *THE PATHFINDER*.

Arthur Franz: The New Jersey-born performer studied acting in a variety of theater groups, culminating in a tenure at the New York Theatre Guild. During World War II he was an air navigator who was shot down in Romania. Nine men survived and were captured by the Germans. Ultimately they were liberated by the Romanians. Following the war, he returned to the Theatre Guild in 13 plays before "Hollywood called." His first film was *JUNGLE PATROL* (1948). Among many other types of roles, he was often cast in science-fiction and horror films. Among those: *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE INVISIBLE MAN* (Univ., 1950); *FLIGHT TO MARS* (Monogram, 1951); *MONSTER ON THE CAMPUS* (Univ., 1958); *BEYOND THE FLAME BARRIER* (UA, 1958); and *BACK FROM THE DEAD* (Regal, 1957.) His most memorable performance was as the crazed killer in Stanley Kramer's *THE SNIPER* (1954).

Franz commented about his role in *INVADERS*: "I had been playing square 'nice guys' roles around that time. There was an 'Arthur Franz' mold that was variously filled by myself or Richard Carlson or Richard Denning with as much distinction as there is from one Oreo cookie to another. . . . These roles were great—they paid the bills. My agent called and I said, 'Sure, I'm available.' It was just a straight bread and butter part."

The twelve-year-old Jimmy Hunt was already a veteran of 38 films (*BELLES ON THEIR TOES*, *WEEKEND WITH FATHER*, *HIGH BARBAREE*, *LONE GUN*, etc.). "I remember having star treatment on this film—a big dressing room with my name on it."

The part of Colonel Robert Fielding went to science-fiction's most familiar actor, Morris Ankrum. The former Shakespearean actor and long time veteran of character roles, invested his part with a solid conviction that created a believable air of urgency. Numbering among his earlier and later science-fiction films were: *FLIGHT TO MARS*, *KRONOS*, *ROCKETSHIP X-M*, *EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS*, *X*, and *BEGINNING OF THE END*.

Behind the camera was John F. Seitz whose career spanned the years 1916-1960; a period in which he shot 250 motion pictures. Among them: *FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE* (1921), *PRISONER OF ZENDA* (1922),



Actor Morris Ankrum.



Jim Hunt, the child star of *INVADERS FROM MARS*, as he appears today.

*THE LOST WEEKEND* (1945); *SUNSET BOULEVARD* (1950) and *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE* (1951). "INVADERS FROM MARS was done on Eastman stock," he recalled. "I directed the camera angles and lighting. The film was lit the same way as it would have been for Technicolor, although the quality of the color was not the same in the Cinecolor process." (Cinecolor Corporation provided a special color consultant, Clifford Shank, who was present on the set to help advise Seitz and the gaffers in establishing correct filtrations and lighting ratios.)

Filming itself took a little over four six-day weeks. Actors reported for work at 8 a.m. to be on the set ready to go at nine. Filming usually



The aliens carry their victims into the ship.

wrapped up at 6 p.m.

The week of October 6 was spent filming most of the sequences atop the MacLean house and around the sand hill. On that Friday the crew moved on to the saucer set. These scenes, and subsequent tunnel sequences, required the talents of a special group of people: seven midgets and two giants.

Eight-foot, 6-inch-tall Max Palmer became the mutant used in most of the tunnel scenes. Often referred to as "the tallest man on Earth" at circus appearances, Max hailed from Mississippi. Although inexperienced in motion pictures at the time, he afterwards went on to play the ape-man giant in Sam Katzman's *KILLER*



APE (Columbia, 1953) and years later toured the country known as "Goliath." Due to his great size and weight, standing and walking required a real effort. Consequently, Palmer usually sat down to rest immediately after a take.

Playing the other giant mutant in some scenes was Lock Martin, the former theater doorman who had enacted the role of the robot Gort in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*.

Midgets were used as stand-ins for the soldiers in several scenes in which normal-sized actors played the mutants in place of the giants, usually in the case of action involving stunts. One of these scenes depicted a mutant grabbing a soldier on the upper level of the saucer and jumping into a circular chute in the floor. Deemed too awkward for either of the two giants to handle, a normal-sized actor was employed as a mutant and a midget was dressed as the soldier.

Midgets were again used in a scene in which soldiers swarm over the body of one of the mutants. As the mutant (Palmer) supposedly lifts Colonel Fielding over his head, use of a midget stand-in heightened the impression of the creature's strength.

The midgets performing in these scenes were: Harry Monty, Buster Resmundi, Paul Klatt, George Spotts, Tommy Cotonaro and Billy Curtis. It was Curtis who organized and assembled the small people for the production. He was 44-years-old at the time and had performed similar functions in many films (*WIZARD OF OZ*, *LADY IN THE DARK*, *THREE WISE FOOLS*, *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS*, *INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN*, *GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH*, and *SUPERMAN VS. THE MOLEMAN*, etc.). In 1959 he played the three-eyed Martian in *THE ANGRY RED PLANET*; and, in 1968, he gathered many midgets together to play the ape children in *PLANET OF THE APES*.

Another midget played a very special role in the picture: the bizarre Martian Intelligence. Her name was Luce Potter. She, with her husband Midge, were former circus performers. (In July of 1952, Luce, Billy Curtis and Harry Monty starred in the pilot for a little-known TV series called *THE LITTLE PEOPLE*.)

Luce's scenes as the Martian were filmed in one day near the end of production. "Luce Potter was a neat little lady," Jimmy Hunt remembered, "probably in her late 40's. She sat on a box with the bubble around her whole head. Her only makeup was on her head. She was just in her little street clothes, and all she did was move her eyes."

Gene Hibbs handled makeup chores, assisted by Steve Drum. According to Hibbs, "The Martian makeup was sketched by Menzies, then developed by myself in detail. A man named Anatole Robbins, a cosmetics expert, prepared a special metallic skin tone makeup that wouldn't harm the skin. It could be put around the actors' mouths and eyes without irritating them. For the Martian lady I secured the rubber mold of the head, then blended it with this gold makeup compound. I blended her neck with the body using regular makeup putty, and covered that with the color compound." (Hibbs applied the same makeup to the plaster mock-up of the Intelligence.)

"The mutants' eyes, forehead and nose were made of plastic, built in the effects department, and worn like goggles. They were fastened with spirit gum. I built up around the eyes and nose with putty and covered everything with silver-green makeup compound."

The giants left an impression on the young Hunt. "When we started working with the big mutants it was a problem for them to physically pick us up and carry us around. It was such a long stretch for those guys. Anything that involved them was difficult since they weren't professionals. It was hot, and because of the slits in their eyepieces they couldn't really see. These guys would always complain about them. They could only wear them for so long before they had to take them off. Poor guys would be crying."

"Max did more of the lifting because he was the stronger of the two. The other one was about 7' 8" and he had to wear lifts to make him as big as Max. Probably the first time in his life he had to wear lifts!"

Ben Chapman remembers the problems caused by the big men as well. "[Max] was so big and out of proportion that he kept banging into things and nearly fell down! He had trouble lifting Helena Carter—we had to pick her up and put her in his arms." This problem was

heightened by the cramped conditions inside the tunnel sets, as Mary Yerke recalls: "John Seitz was a real perfectionist. In the caves he kept trying to get the light just right, so he'd run over and put up another lamp, and then another. After awhile there was just this forest of light stands. You could hardly move in there."

One image that comes into the minds of most viewers is that of the "balloon-filled" caves. "The bubbles on the cave walls," Chapman humorously recalled, "were just everyday white condoms! I went out to the drugstore and bought a whole case of them. . . . We got a real kick out of that!" The condoms were inflated then tied to metal wiring that had been imbedded into the plaster of the cave walls.

Three sequences were not shot on the sound stage: the Coral Bluffs Proving Grounds were filmed in the parking lot behind Stage 6, while the Armstrong Plant was shot against the wall of another stage, with off-camera filtered arcs shining through billowing smoke pots to simulate a great fire.

Republic's main gate stood in for the restricted area of the Bel-Aer Magnesium Plant, and Dr. Wilson's lab (from the outside) was in actuality one of the department offices on the lot. For the subsequent car chase, the crew moved as far as they'd ever get from the studio: Guerin Street, which ran right alongside the studio's lot.

Menzies, handicapped by the loss of his storyboards, demanded Mary Yerke's constant attention throughout production in order to maintain continuity. Scenes requiring an eye for composition, mood and setting he handled with assurance. In contrast, the action sequences in the tunnels and scenes requiring numerous extras proved difficult for Menzies to handle in the short schedule and they represent some of the weaker scenes in the completed film. Menzies relied on Ben Chapman to organize many of these sequences. Even then, Chapman himself had to call for additional help. Leonard Kunody (credited as second assistant director) reported to the stage for two days to help organize a few of the more complicated sequences. None of these problems were made any easier as a number of the crew members became ill during production. At one point, Morris Ankrum was taken to the hospital with pneumonia. (The "contagion" was traced to the production office phone which everyone used.)

Menzies made much out of the Martians' sand traps. He had dropped the original idea of solid trapdoors rising out of the ground in favor of an unearthly sand-whirlpool concept. Wisely the aliens' mechanisms were never shown, nor did Menzies clearly reveal victims being pulled below.

On the set, the whirlpool effect was worked out by Theodore Lydecker. A slit was cut in the underside of the canvas covering the hill. A funnel was inserted into the slit. A hose extended from the funnel to an industrial-type vacuum. When the vacuum was turned on, the surface of sand siphoned open. By slightly moving the funnel along the slit, the yawning hole was made to appear to travel through the sand.

On Saturday, October 18, *INVADERS FROM MARS* was "in the can."

## some personal recollections

James (Jimmy) Hunt: "The production schedule was rapid and that was one of the hardest things for me to cope with as a young actor on this movie. . . . I remember they'd say, 'Well, we've done everything we had scheduled for today, now let's move on.' And I wasn't prepared, so that was difficult for me. The grownups were professional enough to be able to make up something that meant the same things as their lines, but if I forgot I'd just stop."

"For that scene when the father goes out, gets pulled down and comes back with the thing in his neck, I had a mark that I was supposed to be on. I came in and missed the mark by a few inches. And what a perfect reaction! He really did knock me to the floor! The angle was good and it was a take."

"I remember the sets really created an effect. Here was this little boy and the doors were so much bigger than normal. . . . In the scene where Kathy's house is on fire they

couldn't get the smoke to come out of the cellar, so they used smokers, which were really acidic, and bellows to force it to come out. Then the neighbor comes over to put the fire out. . . . and these guys are down there blowing smoke up in his face and he's dying."

"For the montage I was running in place on the sandhill set. They'd put in a bar that I held on to and just ran in place. Only a couple of people were really pulled down into the sand. Helena Carter and I just dropped out of frame. The soldier (Rinaldi) just slid down on to a mattress they had in the pit under the hill."

"Menzies was a perfectionist. He drove people very hard. He knew exactly what he wanted, and when we went into a scene he told us what he wanted, and he knew when he had it."

"I don't think they really knew how they were going to end it while they were shooting. That's a thing that always bothered me about it; yes, they were organized, they knew the scenes exactly, they knew the special effects they wanted, but there seemed to be something missing. There were a lot of changes as we went along."

"It was a fun film to make because it was so different from anything else I'd made. The people were nice and it's been the film that everyone remembers me from." (*INVADERS FROM MARS* was the last film Hunt did. He quit acting in favor of leading a more normal way of life.)

Arthur Franz: "Menzies was delightful, the kind of person I wish I had known better and could've become friends with. . . . You had the feeling you were in good hands. Other directors could be cruel. Menzies was a gentle person. When a person has a really secure sense of who they are and what their talents are, there is no need for sadism."

"I can't remember much about Jimmy Hunt except that he was a really sweet kind; a really innocent kid to work with—not an obnoxious type of scene-stealer at all. I had worked with Morris Ankrum many times. I found him to be a real pillar of strength, a totally dependable actor. Today, everybody wants to be a star, if not today, then tomorrow, but in those days you settled for the reputation of just being a good, solid, dependable actor. And that's what Morris was."

"I only came in contact with her [the Martian] on the set when she was inside that bubble. That was weird. That strikes me about the weirdest thing about that picture. I remember not knowing if she was alive or preserved (laughs)."

Associate producer Edward Alperson Jr.: "My father made every decision on *INVADERS*, relying on Cameron Menzies' artistic recommendations. He trusted him and didn't have to tell him what to do. The picture came out on schedule, on budget, which is a measure of how smoothly filming went. Boris Leven was one of the best art directors in the business. . . . Menzies had everything laid out in advance, and that became a real time-saver."

"This picture was well-done for what it was. [In comparison] today, it wouldn't be, because today the technical advantages, of which we had none, are considerable, as in *STAR WARS* and 2001."

Script supervisor Mary Yerke has always had an interest in art and music. She found *INVADERS FROM MARS* to be one of the most interesting pictures she ever worked on, much of that interest resulting from working with Menzies, whose talents she greatly admired. She was particularly impressed with Menzies' stark realization of the sandhill and the aura of melancholy evoked by the entire setting.

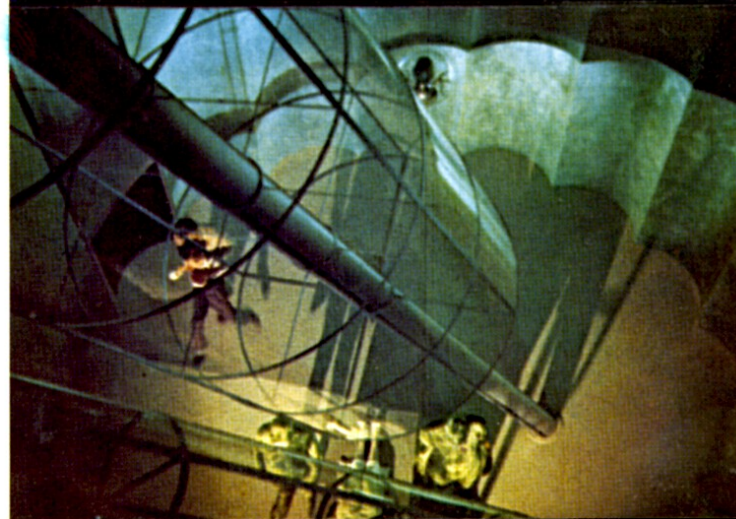
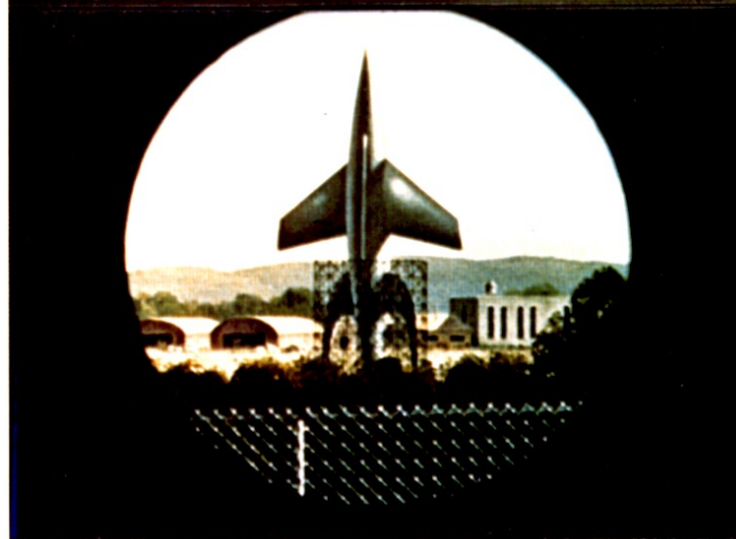
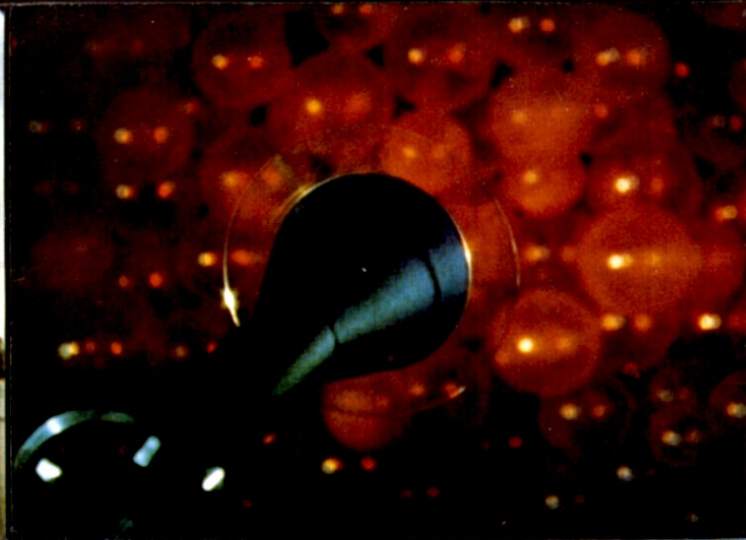
In charge of all visual and dialogue continuity, from her point of view the film was "a toughy, because I had a lot of continuing ideas to keep track of. For instance, the idea of people being transformed by the Martians, after which they act differently. Since this was all shot completely out of sequence, I had to keep

**Opposite, top:** A full view of the massive sand hill set constructed by Ralph Oberg at Republic Studios. **Below, left:** Max Palmer, the 8-foot 6-inch tall giant, menaces Jimmy Hunt. Publicity photos, such as this one, were taken during breaks in shooting. **Right:** On a lunch break, Palmer, minus the top half of his costume, seems to pose no threat to Hunt.











track of whether they were normal or had been injected, so they'd know how to act.

"Menziez was respected. Everybody kept a kind of a distance from him. He was very meticulous. At one point on the interior set of the [MacLeans'] house, he just fussed and fussed over one of the pictures hanging on the wall to get it just right. Nobody ever said anything to him. He just kept adjusting it; and I wondered if we were ever going to be able to finish the picture if he kept going on like this.

"He'd often tell stories about Scotland between takes. Because of Menziez' reputation, Ben Chapman was often in an awkward position in which he couldn't break him away from his coterie of friends. So he had extra difficulties and responsibilities to handle during production.... It was a difficult task for him due to all the extras, the Army vehicles and so forth that had to be organized in a very short time."

(Mary Yerke is now script supervisor on TV's *LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE*.)

Cinematographer John Seitz deserves much credit for his engineering of the unusual lighting setups and the deep-focus techniques used in the film. He recalls "[*INVADERS*] was made considerably in advance of the great emphasis on space travel and events. I remember the picture being a most pleasant experience to make in that Bill Menziez and Eddie Alperson were both delightful and cooperative. Although the cast had no 'star' names, most of them were veteran performers and allowed the shooting to be wrapped up on schedule."

## special effects

*INVADERS FROM MARS* was not a film full of complex special effects. What effects it featured were not overtly spectacular or difficult to accomplish. Generally, they were expertly rendered and of interest primarily due to their beautiful use of imagery in conveying standard science-fiction devices.

Most of the effects used were mechanical ones managed on the stage by Theodore Lydecker. These included explosions, the opening sand pits, cave-ins, gunfire, lightning flashes, rain, smoke and the burning of the Armstrong Plant.

Opticals and matte effects were credited to veteran Jack Cosgrove. In reality Cosgrove did not do much of the actual work but farmed it out to Jack Rabin and Irving Block.

For the background of the opening titles Rabin suspended small painted globes and marbles in front of a large, back-lit transparency of a purple-hued outer space speckled with stars. He slowly dollied the camera in, creating the atmospheric—if wholly unscientific—three-dimensional effect of passing planetoids in space. Over this, Arthur Franz delivered the opening narration.

Rabin painted the establishing view of the MacLeans' house. Painted cell overlays were used to produce flashes of lightning in the sky and their reflections on the rooftops and trees. He also painted the view of the sandhill as seen through David's window. The saucer landing was his cell animation superimposed into the painting.

A miniature of the sandhill and the green, translucent dome of the saucer was built at



The creation of the Martian Intelligence effect involved: John Tucker Battle (original idea); Menziez (additional ideas and sketches); Boris Leven (practical drawings); Howard and Theodore Lydecker (construction of head dome and tentacled "body"); Anatole Robbins (special metallic make-up-mixture that could be applied around eyes, nose and mouth); Gene Hibbs and Steve Drum (applied and blended make-up); Luce Potter (midget actress who portrayed the Martian itself); two grips who manipulated the tentacles with wires off screen; John Seitz (photographed matte); and Jack Rabin (composited the mattes optically).



Under the heat of the Martians' ray, the solid rock bubbles up and recedes.

Opposite, left column (top to bottom): 1. The bleak autumn landscape where people vanish only to return "not as themselves". 2. Rinaldi is pulled into the ground by unknown beings. 3. Irving Block's painting representing the experimental rocket. 4. The lower level of the flying saucer. Right column: 1. A mutant (Max Palmer) bores a hole through the tunnel wall with a heat ray, while another mutant (Lock Martin) looks on. 2. The effect of the blistered cave walls being heated up was achieved, in its first stages, by the shining of a rheostat-controlled, red-filtered spotlight upon a cluster of condoms inflated like balloons. 3. The Martian Intelligence; "His eyes seem to dart fire as he looks from one Mutant to the other, unmistakably giving orders." (From Richard Blake's 1952 revised script.) 4. A fine example of Menziez' careful composition of each shot. He firmly believed in the dynamics possible within stationary shots.





Four scenes from the additional sequences shot for the European market. Top, left: David and Dr. Blake examine a model of a "Type 2" U.F.O. sighting. This scene was added to the observatory sequence. Bottom: In the European version everything's not a dream. Kelston, David and Dr. Blake shield themselves behind an army vehicle as the Martians' ship explodes. Top, right: Extremely poor matte work was used to create the illusion of shadows generated by the light of the explosion. This was optically printed atop Jack Rabin's original painting of the sandhill and cell animation of the saucer landing. In this version of the film, the saucer landing was reversed (so that the ship "took off"), and a poorly aligned explosion was optically doubled in. Bottom, right: Back at the MacLean house Kelston and Dr. Blake tuck David in to bed and assure him that his parents, after their operation, will be just like before.

Republic's effects shop. These were used to create the short, but effective scene of the saucer descending into the Earth's crust. Another simple model represented the view through the circular chute to the lower level of the saucer.

Block's work consisted of two paintings: the Coral Bluffs rocket as viewed through Kelston's telescope during the day, and the same ship as it appeared, lit by searchlights, against the night sky. His spaceship concept was based on the type of ship he'd envisioned for *FLIGHT TO MARS*.

Cosgrove supervised the shooting of the establishing shot of the Intelligence on the set. The entire globe was photographed while outlined by a circular black matte. This done, the globe was then masked in black and the saucer wall in the background was separately photographed. These two elements were given to Rabin who combined them in an optical printer to produce the complete image.

The strangest effect in the film was that of the bubbling walls. There were two versions of the shot. In the first instance a shot of a red light shining upon a cluster of full-sized wall bubbles was followed by a closeup of a bead-surfaced, plaster miniature representing a large section of cave wall. The whole image was bathed in intense red light. As the image began to "burn out" through overexposure, it dissolved into a closeup (approximately the same scale) of a boiling, porridge-like liquid, also overexposed by red-filtered light. A shock cut to an explosion completed the effect of a super-heated cave wall shattering to pieces.

Another version of this effect was handled

by Lydecker. In this case, a circular area of the wall burns glassy-red and seems to recede tunnel-like into the wall itself: "We used a technique that hasn't been used in 30 years," he explained. "We took a picture of this bubbled wall, then printed it onto glass. We mounted the glass on a bracket in front of the camera. Then we put about ten stereo plates [large transparencies] behind the glass on the bracket. We put a heat element behind the whole thing, then photographed it. The heat element would melt the special emulsions on the plates. We had to hit it at just the right time to get the right effect." As the heat took effect, the emulsions bubbled up and shrunk away—appearing to recede "into" the image of the wall.

## the music



Adding immeasurably to the film's atmosphere were its ethereal and haunting musical themes, composed with care, imagination and a touch of genius by Raoul Kraushaar. The Paris-born composer and musical director had

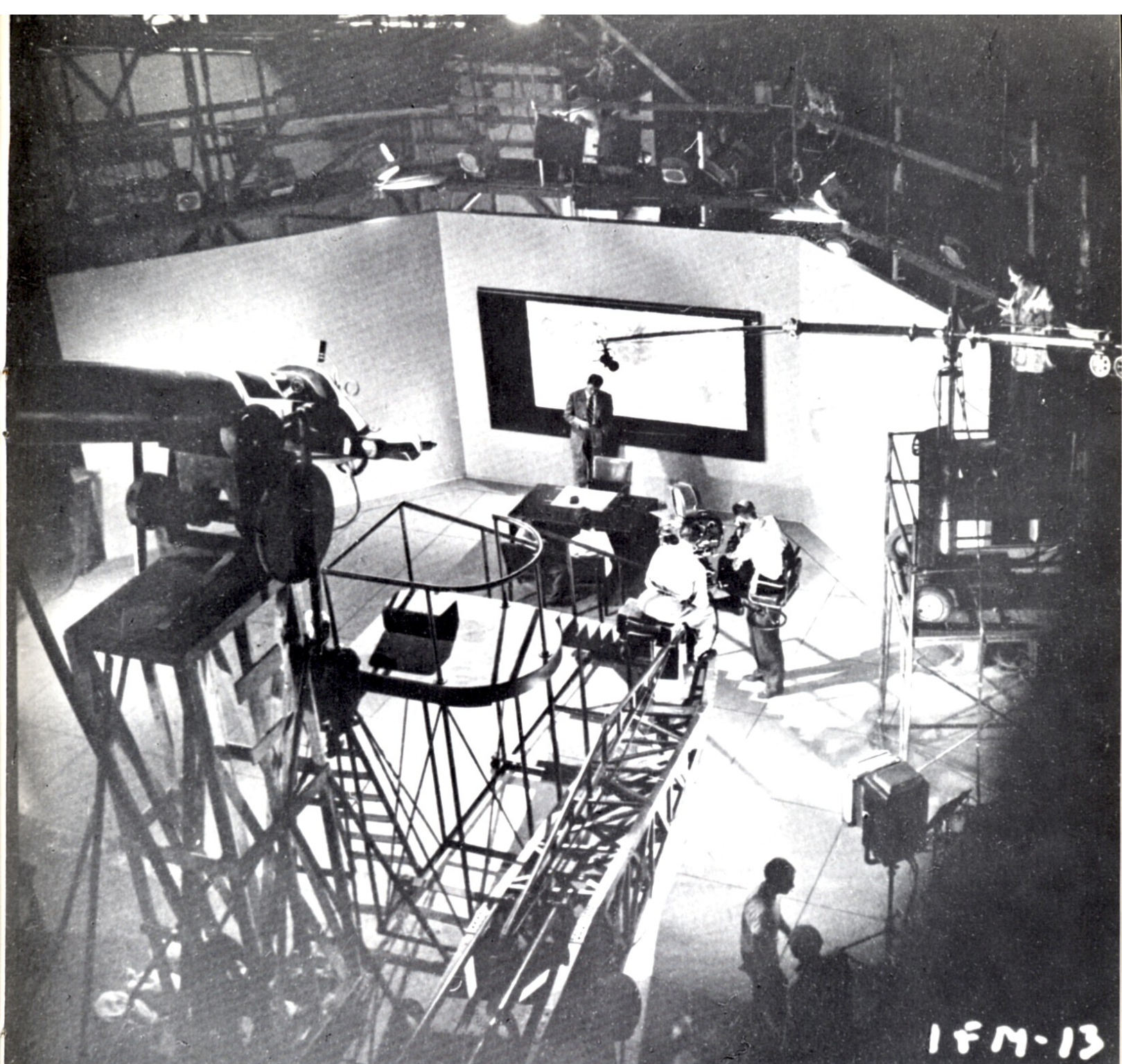
a long career that included compositions for *COVERED WAGON*, *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS*, *BEAU GESTE* and others. For a period of time he was a staff composer for Republic Pictures, where often his talents far exceeded the films he scored. His more recent credits include *MAGNIFICENT MATADOR*, *MOHAWK* and *CABARET*.

"I'd done other pictures for Alperson," Kraushaar explained, "so he hired me to do this one. He gave me a script and I read it. I had some ideas of using certain effects as I watched the dailies. We never had any conferences. I would look at the first cut; then I ran it with Alperson and the music editor [Richard Harris] and I made a list of where the music should go. Alperson would always say 'Tell me where it *doesn't* need music, not where it does.'

"I gave my [recommendations] to Alperson and he never questioned them. Then the music editor broke it all down and counted it for me. I had a couple of themes already in mind so I went to work on it. I knew Menzies very well, but never discussed the music with him."

Certainly the most memorable of all the pieces he composed was that accompanying the opening of the sand pits. The original idea of a humming vibration wisely was dropped and replaced by Kraushaar's eerie choir voices performing in almost chant-like acapella. Critic Jim Wnoroski accurately summed up the mood of these scenes: "Kraushaar's choral group conjures up visions of a dying Martian landscape or the wailing of frightened minds in hell. It is truly one of the best and most effective scores of its type."





The observatory set: One year after the film's completion a portion of this set was reconstructed in expanded form at KTTV TV Studios to accommodate filming of additional scenes for European markets.

Kraushaar talked about this aspect of his composition: "I felt that an orchestra alone wouldn't sell the idea of the eeriness of the sequences when the people sink into the ground, because actually you didn't see too much. You just saw the people drop, then you saw the sand settling. I thought that in order to accentuate it, to make it feel like something had actually happened, the music itself would help to sell the story. It had to be in keeping with the rest of the music. It was a simple melody—it was A,B,D,B,—just eerie enough. The choral group was run by Ricky Ricardo, who runs The Horn out in the San Fernando Valley. He got 16 singers—eight men and eight women—that we used for those scenes, then we put it through an echo in the dubbing to give it more of a weird feeling. With straight voices you can't get that feeling."

Regarding the music underscoring the observatory dome turning: "I wanted to give this big observatory with this big telescope the feel-

ing of splendor and grandeur, because you actually didn't see too much in the way it was photographed. So I wanted to give it a feeling of something ethereal, and yet with the feeling of something to come... I used about 40 musicians on that."

"There was only one thing I didn't like which Alpersen wanted me to do: The 'Casson' theme, when they're moving the tanks. I thought that was a little too corny, but he was paying the bills. I orchestrated it, but I wanted more of a dramatic march there, because the soldiers don't know what they're up against or what they're getting into. But Alpersen said, 'I want army music!' I put up an argument, but I couldn't win. I don't think it bothered the picture too much. Might have been a few chuckles here and there."

"Alpersen used to like to cut the film himself—which was one of his failings. Everything I wrote was used in the film because he didn't believe in throwing anything away, and Arthur

Roberts [the editor] did a good job with it. He worked with Alpersen."

"Although I had seen it several times, I still had to wait for the final cut to score it... but the final footage wasn't ready at the time I went to record it, so I didn't have the correct timing on the footage." There was a reason for this: Anyone who has seen the film notices the repeating of scenes during the end sequences. Boris Leven explained some of the problems with the ending: "When this film was finished, it was too short. In order to qualify it for theatrical showings it had to be so many minutes long, and Alpersen found he was about ten minutes short of this. He called me in and we tried to figure out how, with the existing film, we could lengthen it. So we did all kinds of tricky stuff. In the tunnel we repeated scenes, then reverse-printed the film so that these big guys went back and forth. Then we did optical closeups, the montage—simply to get enough footage." In that way, the



running time was boosted to a satisfactory 78 minutes.

"So they kept re-cutting the ending," Kraushaar recalled. "I was just given rough directions, like '20 feet here' and '20 feet there,' and 'cut to the boy,' then 'cut to the timer.' Arthur Roberts had marked on the leader, 'superimpose running here' and then the footage length they thought it would be. That made my part pretty rough and I had to use my own judgment."

"It took about two or three weeks to score. Alpersen had money tied up in Rome, so I went and recorded it there. I did the voices here, but did the orchestra there. I had a budget that included myself and the orchestra. I had about 70 men there—the Santa Cecilia Orchestra. I had to go through a lot of red tape to get to use them. I think it was one of the first pictures that they ever did that way for an American company. It was a dramatic picture, and I thought they were right for it. It took about three days to record. Fono Roma was the name of the studio we used. We had two or three recording setups, and I used a big orchestra for six hours and cut down as I went along."

"One of the men in the orchestra spoke English and I knew enough Italian music terms to instruct them. If I had any problems I would use this one violinist who would tell them, and I think they responded very well."

"I must have done about 50 minutes of music, then we brought it back here and dubbed it at Todd A-O, which we had rented out."

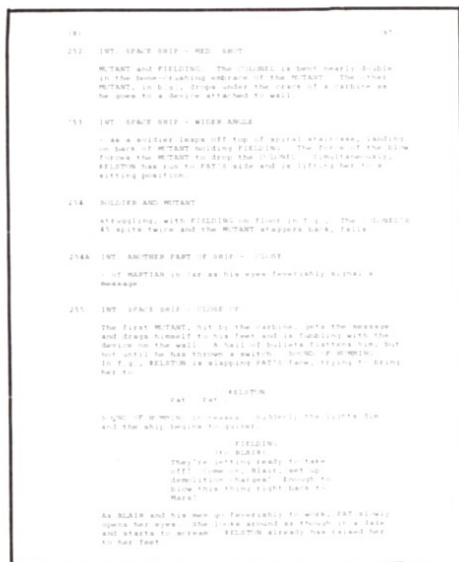
On April 6, 1953, *INVADERS FROM MARS* received its first press screenings. The reviews were favorably enthusiastic. It went into general release in May and proceeded to do above-average business wherever it was shown. But the story of its making was not over yet. The following article appeared in *The Hollywood Reporter* on September 1: [Edward Alpersen is] adding approximately eight minutes of scientific sequences [to *INVADERS FROM MARS*] for foreign distribution. Big factor is that dream effects aren't too popular with foreign audiences, especially in Europe; thus the producers will alter so that viewers can use their own imaginations. Reporting for their respective roles on Wednesday at KTTV are Arthur Franz, Jimmy Hunt and Helena Carter." So the film whose history was marked by endless tampering and changes, was due in for more of the same.

The eight minutes of new footage were added to the observatory sequence, most of it consisting of pseudo-scientific dialogue. John Tucker Battle might have felt vindicated had he learned of this "new" version since much of it was taken from his original screenplay.

The sequence begins with a cut to a new side-on angle of Dr. Kelston at his desk talking to Pat and David seated opposite. Kelston steps over to a wall covered with shadow-box displays of stars and planets, paintings of Mars' surface and astronomical charts. On a table lay books filled with photos of real-life UFO's. Dr. Kelston discusses in detail surface temperatures and atmospheric conditions on Mars, as he expands on his theory of a subterranean Martian civilization. He lends credence to David's story by referring to several documented UFO sightings. Kelston displays three models supposedly representing the most common UFO-types reported. Type One is a silver, jet-shaped object. Type Two is a sphere girdled by rings. As Kelston displays Type Three, David exclaims, "That's it! That's the one I saw!" It is a green, domed, saucer-shaped object with a bubble on top. (It only vaguely resembles the ship shown earlier in the film.) The three return to Kelston's desk and the scene resumes in the familiar fashion.

Viewed critically this new scene, added to lend believability to the film's fantastic premise for the sake of audiences overseas, doesn't really help the film. The dialogue and action drag on unconvincingly. Jimmy Hunt appears older, the set doesn't match and the image is curiously flat in a film otherwise imbued with an extraordinary quality of depth. Direction of this section was handled by former child star Wesley Barry, who went on, in 1963, to direct *CREATION OF THE HUMANOIDS*.

The "it's-a-dream" ending also underwent a change—a change back again to one that might have met with Battle's approval. In this version, soldiers are fleeing the vicinity of the sandhill moments before the saucer is due to explode.



From Richard Blake's revised script.

In a new scene, David, Pat and Kelston duck behind a jeep and look off in the direction of the sandhill. The saucer lifts off. Seconds later, it explodes in mid-air.

As the smoke clears, Kelston and Pat assure David that his parents will be all right in the morning. The image dissolves to David lying in bed as Kelston and Pat—leaning in his doorway—bid him goodnight.

"I scored two endings for the film," Kraushaar stated. "Alpersen told me he was filming two endings to see how the public would take it. He was friendly with the people at KTTV-TV—the Nassours—so he used their studio space." Kraushaar composed music for the new ending without even knowing exactly what it would be...the characteristic note on which production of *INVADERS FROM MARS* ended.

The film remained "finished" in these two versions for 23 years. As time progressed, it fell into relative obscurity. Television eventually picked it up, preferring to run it on afternoons for young viewers. As color prints grew scarce, *INVADERS FROM MARS* increasingly was unreel in black and white—and heavily edited at that. It became just another childhood memory for most. Following Edward Alpersen Sr.'s declaration of bankruptcy in 1966, all the props, records and mementos of the film were liquidated with the estate and eventually all of it wound up in an incinerator. At that time attorney Richard Rosenfeld acquired the rights to *INVADERS* from Alpersen's estate and to this date handles distribution of the film theatrically in foreign markets, where it continues to lure a great number of moviegoers.

In 1976, a Kansas City-based film distributor, Wade Williams, negotiated a distribution agreement with Rosenfeld. Williams, an enthusiastic fan of the film, sought out the rights to the film in order to help preserve it by striking new negatives and prints.

Williams commissioned a new poster for re-release bookings of the film. The original poster work was rendered by the 20th Century-Fox artist who created the basic poster art for *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* and it was very much a product of the 1950's. Artist Greg Thiekston created a new one-sheet capped with the catchline: "A Nightmarish Answer to the Wizard of Oz!" Another, alternate poster concept recently was developed by motion picture artist Mike Minor.

As a concession to contemporary viewers, Williams made several minor alterations in re-release prints: Some of the repetitive scenes of mutants loping back and forth through the tunnels were trimmed to approximate the way it was originally shot. Several lines, corny by today's standards, were deleted along with long stretches of color-mismatched army stock footage. The eight minutes of expository dialogue shot at KTTV, as well as the "European version" scene of Kelston, Pat and David watching the saucer explode from behind a jeep, have been added into this new "American" version, while the "dream" ending remains.

If nothing else, *INVADERS FROM MARS* stands as one of the higher points of science-

fantasy film making attained in the simpler times of the 1950's. Even with its lumbering, zipper-suited aliens and its occasionally "mobile" wall-bubbles, the film exerts hauntingly memorable qualities. As one of the most concentrated doses of William Cameron Menzies' unique imagination, it is a fitting—if flawed—tribute. It is, as well, a tribute especially to the talents of John Tucker Battle, Boris Leven and Raoul Kraushaar who contributed in a major way to its success.

*INVADERS FROM MARS* is a fine souvenir from an era before demographics, best-sellers, corporate conglomerates and computer technology eliminated the dominance of personal art from mass entertainment. Most of all this remarkable film will be remembered as a special example of a genre that celebrates the wonders of the human imagination. □

#### REVISED CREDITS

Produced by: Edward L. Alpersen, Sr. Associate Producer: Edward Alpersen, Jr. Production Designed and Directed by: William Cameron Menzies. Assistant Director: Ben Chapman. 2nd Assistant Director: Leonard Kunody. Screenplay by: John Tucker Battle, with William C. Menzies and Richard Blake. Art Director: Boris Leven. Set Construction: Ralph Oberg. Set Decorator: Eddie Boyle. Production Manager: B. Chapman. Special Mechanical Effects and Miniatures: Theodore Lydecker. Opticals and Mattes: Jack Rabin and Irving Block. Cinematography by: John F. Seitz. Cinecolor Consultant: Clifford D. Shank. Script Supervisor: Mary Yerke. Special Costumes by: Norma Koch. Make-up by: Gene Hibbs. Assistant Make-up: Steve Drum. Special Make-up Compound by: Anatole Robbins. Sound by: Earl Crane, Sr. Boom Man: Earl Crane, Jr. Hairdresser: Ruby Felker. Women's Wardrobe: Olive Konitz. Men's Wardrobe: Gene Martin. Electricians: Jimmy Phillips, Paul Guerin. Editorial Supervision: Arthur Roberts. Music by: Raoul Kraushaar. Music Editor: Richard Harris. Additional Sequences Director: Wesley Barry. Photographed in Eastman color. Prints by Cinecolor. Released by 20th Century Fox.

#### CAST

Helena Carter as Dr. Pat Blake  
Jimmy Hunt as David MacLean  
Arthur Franz as Dr. Stuart Kelston  
Leif Erickson as George MacLean  
Hillary Brooke as Mary MacLean  
Morris Ankrum as Col. Fielding  
Max Wagner as Sgt. Rinaldi  
Milburn Stone as Capt. Roth  
Bill Phipps as Maj. Cleary  
Walter Sande as Desk Sgt. Finley  
Bert Freed as Chief Barrows  
Douglas Kennedy as Officer Jackson  
Charles Kane as Officer Blaine  
Robert Shayne as Dr. William Wilson  
Peter Brocco as Brainard  
Janine Perreau as Kathy Wilson  
John Eldridge as Mr. Turner  
Barbara Billingsly as Dr. Kelston's Secretary  
William Forrest as General Mayberry  
Frank Wilcox as The Chief of Staff  
Richard Deacon as Sentry Regan  
Lucie Potter as The Martian Intelligence  
Max Palmer and Lock Martin as The (giant) Mutants  
Billy Curtis, Harry Monty, Paul Klatt, Tommy Cotonaro, George Spotts, Buster Resmundi: Stand-ins

(For a further in-depth study of *INVADERS FROM MARS* see issue number 28 of *Photon* magazine.)

Opposite: Preparing to shoot the pull-back dolly shot of the soldiers moving in on the sandhill. William Cameron Menzies (light-haired man with arm raised in middle foreground) is calling for the proper camera angle. Almost every scene in the film was shot on this, the big Mable Normand Stage at Republic.





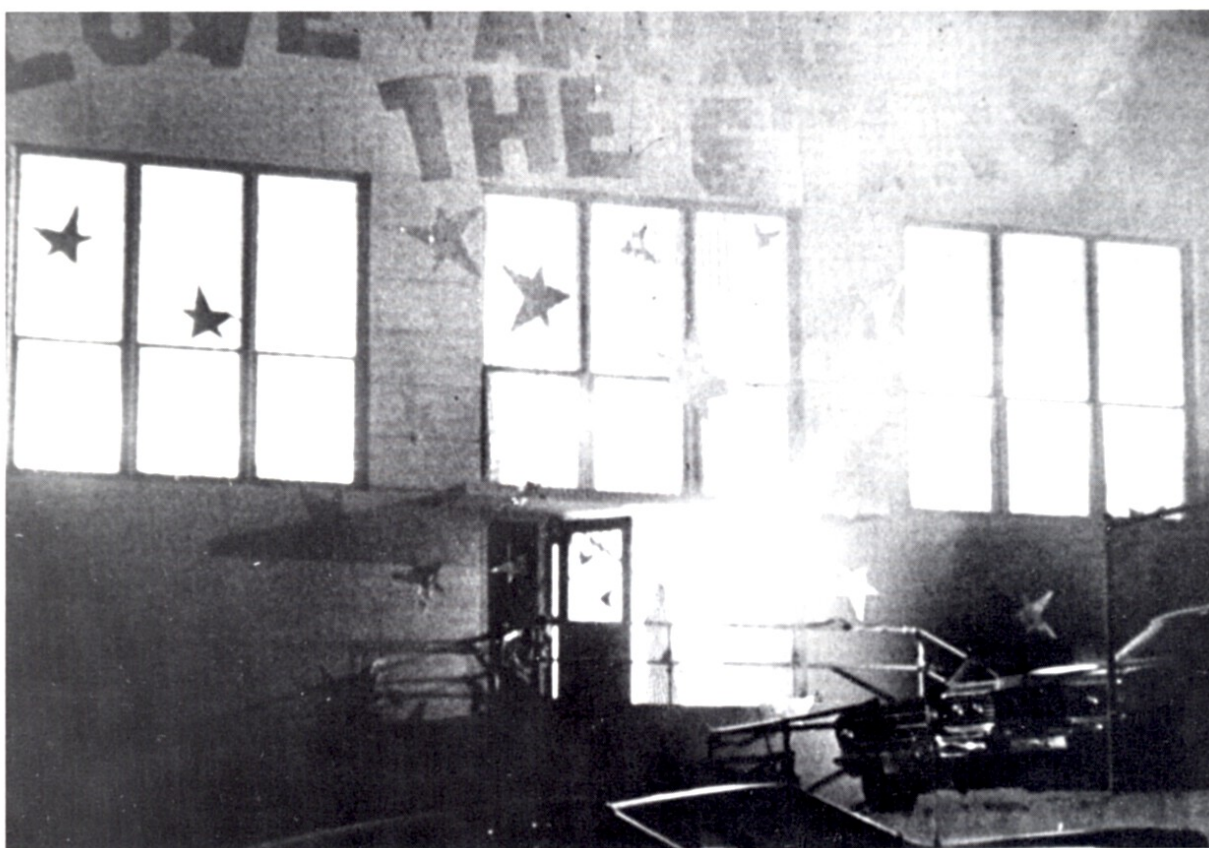


The conclusion of our 2-part series of interviews detailing the making of Brian De Palma's *CARRIE*. In part 1, associate editor Scot Holton spoke to special effects-man Greg Auer, art director Jack Fisk and star Sissy Spacek.

commentary and in-depth interviews on the creative and technical aspects of...

# carrie

By Scot Holton



## Don Heitzer on *CARRIE*

Don Heitzer, first assistant director on *CARRIE*, graduated from UCLA as a film major and spent his first years out of school writing TV comedies, and several screenplays. "But I didn't really make a living at it," he recalls. "During that period I worked parttime on several film crews for Roger Corman, and worked on rock promos for Charlantan Productions, a small company I had become acquainted with working on *THE TRIP*. In 1969, I worked on my first feature as production manager at the American Film Institute, and followed this working in the same capacity on *ANGELS HARD AS THEY COME* and *THE SLAMS* with Jack Fisk as art director. Also in this period were *COOL BREEZE*, *PRIVATE PARTS*, *CAGED HEAT*, *WHITE LINE FEVER*, *VIGILANTE FORCE*, and production consultant on *CHAC*.

"On *VIGILANTE FORCE*, I became acquainted with Lee Katz, general executive production manager at United Artists who put me in touch with Paul Monash, producer on *CARRIE*. Lou Stroller had already been chosen as production manager, so I was offered a position as first assistant director. The assistant director is responsible to the director and the production manager. He sees that the schedule moves along properly. The director must be free for his responsibilities to the creative aspect, and not become bogged down in logistics.

"During the four-week preparation period, my initial two responsibilities were doing a script breakdown, and a schedule board to begin preliminary planning. The assistant director additionally has control over the call times, who gets where and when, when to break, the elements that relate to money, moving extras, and organizing background movement. On any given day, I'd meet with Brian at seven a.m., and I'd get the sequence of the schedule for that day. He'd tell me, 'shots one through 12,' or master shot number what-

ever, or what major dolly move to prepare for. During the day's shooting, he'd check to see where we were. Brian is not really loquacious in addressing groups, so he'd delegate that to me, and I had a second assistant director, Bill Scott, and production assistant, Jim Carter, with me.

"The logistics for the shower scene presented quite a few interesting and tremendous problems because of the nudity. The eight principals in the scene were all worried about it. They had concerns about their careers as well as personal modesty. We had a lot of steam thanks to Greg Auer and Ken Pepiot, but the girls were all hollering, 'more steam, more steam,' and the camera operator was way down the row at the end of the lockers saying, 'I can't even see the lockers.' They were all begging to know where the frame line was. Brian wanted the center section of shower girls to meet the camera as it continued its dolly past the second row of benches. My job was the timing of the cues for the girls' movements. As soon as it was action from the first row, I had to wait



a couple of beats and give the cues to the next group, and the timing on that was such that they wouldn't get there until the camera did. Anyhow, they were all worried about the frame line, and kept on asking where it was. Well, at the head of the shot, it was a big wide shot, and we really didn't start to move in on close-ups till the end of the row of lockers on the far right lane. On the open dailies we were all there, and when we saw it, we were all stunned at how perfectly it had worked. That was all shot in ultra-high speed, and the girls were simply told to come out in natural motion, throwing their towels and clothes at each other.

"As an example of how far-sighted Brian is, he had been saying through three weeks of preparation, 'We'd better have those people practicing volleyball because they'll have to make six straight passes before the ball goes to Carrie.' Well, with all the other factors, we had never got around to it. Anyhow, we had only had them up there tossing it around a little bit on that day. Brian got up in the crane and we set the teams up. The trouble started with the first serve. They were very inaccurate about where they could place the ball. I was on the ground and Brian had me work it out, so I would serve the ball just out of frame. You never see the serve anyway, and there was no point in having them do it if they couldn't do it right. So we worked out a routine of who would hit it to who. During the shooting of it, at the same time they were continuing with the ball, the crane was moving down. When it got to a certain spot, the prop man would drop the net and the crane would move in, the ball game continuing the whole time, partially off camera. Even if the ball was lost, the teams would go on acting as if the game was going on. The prop man actually had another ball, and when the crane moved in on Carrie, on his cue he'd toss the ball in at her, and she'd take it on the head. All in one shot that we did in twenty takes.

"The street scenes with the cars cruising involved a whole night's work. You've got sunrise working against you the whole time. We were on Vermont Avenue between Hollywood Boulevard and Franklin, and had made arrangements to have store lights left on all night. There were five principal cars plus atmosphere to coordinate in that sequence. We had two motorcycle policemen with us helping. They can be extremely helpful in preventing serious accidents in a scene like this. One of the things an assistant director often goes up against is interference with his work. This is because it is a job that involves common sense—you've got to think about and come up with a sensible way to do one thing or another, like how to move people and cars down the street and get everyone safely through it. I rode in the camera car with a walkie-talkie, communicating to three other cars and the police up in front of us. We had to caravan around several blocks and regroup every time we'd make a shot. We had the camera car first, Travolta's car, the two rowdies that throw the beer can and drive away, the car with the four girls that come up screaming at him, and then the cop car that comes up and shines the light on him. The problem with that whole night of shooting was that instead of shooting the master first, using all the expensive extras, and existing street activity, we did the mount shouts of the interior of John's car first, and didn't start the master until 3:30 in the morning. By then, half of the street lights were turned off, and by 5:30 in the morning, the rest of the street lights went off, the sun came up and we had to stop shooting.

"For the interiors of the prom sequence we moved into the soundstage to shoot for ten days. Lou had engineered all the procedure involving costumes, makeup people, all 200 extras, and planned all the time we needed to get them on the set. Their calls were all staggered on 15-minute intervals beginning at seven a.m. to be ready by nine a.m. There were two major crane shots in that sequence. On the first, the camera was way up off the set, in the upper right hand corner, looking towards the bandstand. Brian has never dreamed up a simple shot. He's always executed his vision and the beauty of DePalma is he's such a successful commander. You know from the get-go, from the minute you see the first dailies, that this guy's good. Every one of those shots is a challenge, and all the technicians on CARRIE loved challenges and bust their asses to make them. Once the director



Brian DePalma expresses the sense of release he wants from Piper Laurie in the crucifixion sequence.



"Carrie turns on a light... she stops and looks at herself in the mirror. A close, tired inspection. Her eyes seem hollow, haunted. Carrie doesn't like what she sees; she doesn't like herself. Flex! Slowly cracks appear in the mirror, spiderwebs... Flex! The mirror shatters, crashes to the dresser in pieces." From Lawrence Cohen's screenplay.

gives you the setup, he tells you, 'I want to start here, begin to move down and through the crowd, down past the middle of the room, past the big ball, stop and look at the band, turn left and go to the door and end up on Billy and Sissy coming in and handing in their tickets.' The first job is for Mario to start lighting it. Then Brian gets up on the crane with Mario and looks at it. After the final adjustments, we bring on the extras, put them into position and look at them, see where the edge of the frame is, where we need more bodies and where we don't. The camera operator would tell us where

we needed to fill in, and make the first adjustment. First we put the dancers on the floor, laid out space for the principles and key people. We picked out squad leaders in the extras, and gave them numbers and told them, 'When you hear your number, bring your crowd here, or whatever.' And like a general, you plot out all these maneuvers. So basically, you're responsible for all the background movement, which I consider highly creative, in that you can sink or swim in a big scene if holes in the crowds show up.

"Then we made the first move through. I



was at the camera's first position the whole time, observing the process, radioing directions to the assistants who moved the people on and in place. As the crane came down we had these wheels of people moving in and out, and when we were satisfied we had it right, we made the shot. When it came on the dailies, it was breathtaking.

"The other big crane shot at the gym took 28 takes. We started the setup at seven a.m., made our first shot after lunch, and had a print about four-thirty. We had various problems with this, and it was a four-minute take each time. They had to remove major sections of wire that were all through the gym, and make some modifications in the structure so the crane could get in and out. Since the design of the shot was extremely ambitious, and expensive, Lou Stroller had come down to discuss the setup with all of us. The problems were many, and he made several suggestions toward simplification of the shot. Brian got really angry about the challenge to his artistic concept, and said, 'If you want to make a cheapskate shot, so be it, but it's not the shot that I want to make, and it shouldn't be a part of this movie.' So we did it the way Brian wanted, and it took 28 takes. The shot starts with Norma collecting the prom ballots, and runs continuously as she goes from table to table, switches them, hands them in, goes to the side of the stage to Sue's entrance and up the rope over to the bucket, dips down, levels out at the crowd on the floor, and zooms in on Sissy and Billy. Wheeew! My job was to move the sections of lines of extras through that whole scene, clear out what's not in frame, and get the principals in frame for their schticks in just enough time for the camera to read the action, and get everyone through it with an eye to the technical aspects (i.e., not getting run over by the crane, or smacked by the boom arm). I remember going to the dailies with Brian on this one. It had worked so well, and as we walked in Brian said, 'Whatever they're paying us, it's not enough.'

"One of the most special things to me in terms of the performance of my job that relates to Brian's sense of artistic vision is knowing

## Brian DePalma on CARRIE

"I first became interested in making CARRIE when a writer friend told me that a friend of his had written a book called CARRIE that I might be interested in. So I walked around the corner from my apartment to Bookmaster's and bought the hardcover of CARRIE. I took it home, read it, and liked it, and proceeded to call around to find out who owned it. I finally located it at Fox with Paul Monash. When I was in L.A. working on OBSESSION, I had a few meetings with him because I was interested in doing CARRIE. But he was already interested in another director at the time. It looked like that deal had already been made, so I went home to forget about it.

"Then, for some reason, Fox decided not to go ahead with CARRIE, so Paul turned around and brought it over to U.A. Mike Medavoy and Eric Pleskow felt that I should do it. Mike is the head of production, and Eric is the president of the company. Monash was convinced by their belief in me to let me direct the film—and that's how I got to direct it.

"I try to come up with a conceptual idea for each film. When I lay out a storyboard for a film, I try to create a design for the whole film. As I'm working on each section, I come up with specific stylistic approaches to each scene and then make sure they fit into the whole film. I don't go in with certain objectives right in the beginning. First I try to get a visual conceptualization for each scene and then try to weave them into a fabric for the movie. Whenever I read something, I'm already visualizing what it would look like, and developing some strong visual ideas. I think that some of the most obvious stylizations in CARRIE are things that came to me as I was laying the film out, making my drawings and moving them around. I thought, what would happen if I did this?, and how would that fit into that? So I have some

a film to make them all work as one kind of mood.

"To start with the opening scene of the volleyball game: The whole idea in doing a sports event is to make it look live, like it's one unit. You can't cut up sports events. That's why they're hard to do on film, you can't dramatize them. What makes it look real is the fact that it's happening in a specific time sense, and the only way to achieve that is to use one shot. Once you start cutting to people hitting, you break up the validity of the game and it becomes a fabrication. Nobody would watch a sport if they believed it was fabricated. So we had to make the crane shot be one shot and get the ball over the net four times, so it looks like those girls are playing volleyball. Now that's a very elaborate conception for one crane shot, but that's the kind of thing that I'm very concerned with.

"The next sequence is the slow-motion tracking shot in the shower room. This goes with the whole concept of the movie having an eroticism that leads to violence and blood every time. It happens three times: first with the shower scene, then when Carrie's on stage, and then when Amy goes to the grave and gets hit with the hand. Those are all very carefully conceived, like music—very cinematic recapitulations of thematic stylistic things throughout the movie. There's a stylistic theme to every scene in the movie. If it's two people talking together, then there's a reason for two people talking and it's a two-shot. You need that kind of simplicity there, because you're basically concentrating on what the characters are saying to each other. So you want the exposition to be very simple. But if you're dealing with two actors trying to make some kind of emotional contact, you shoot for emotion transferred to the screen. The best way is not to cut it up too much. Again, it's like magic. Once you start cutting it up, and you know that it's two separate closeups, there's no reality to the moment that the two actors are experiencing in a certain time. And, in a visual sense, you don't believe it.

"It's a very underlying thing. Very few people are consciously aware of it. Television



## TELEKINESIS

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that we're just not going to grab at a shot. On many films I've worked on, we discuss coverage in terms of grabbing this or that shot, and on CARRIE we didn't set that kind of a pace. Everything was elaborately plotted out, and that kind of detailed thinking and planning shows. Brian is 100 percent prepared, and that is a tremendous help to me in knowing what I've got to do. The first time I went to his house, the walls were covered with little pictures in sequence for every shot he intended to make.

"Sometimes, he'd become so totally immersed during the filming to the point that he'd turn around and bump right into you because he was so deep into his head. Or he'd suddenly charge away and step on your toe. But I knew what he was into. He's really as nice as can be, and has a great sense of humor and can take a lot of ribbing. He brings this great energizing quality with him into a project that fires everybody up to want to do their best."

broad ideas and then I try to refine them as I build the whole design to the mood.

"As an example: The house that Carrie lived in had to be very strange in relationship to the town in which she lived. It was a projection of her own adolescent alienation, but it couldn't be like a Charles Addams 'house on the hill.' That's just too much. Actually, Jack Fisk ultimately came up with a house that was strange, but not that strange. The strangeness came from how we made the interiors look. I made it resemble a church with the three arches, but all within a somewhat realistic world. You always have to be careful with the stylization, so that it doesn't become unreal. That's always a problem. We had to temper that all the time.

"There's all kinds of stylization; there's art direction stylization and cinematic stylization. CARRIE's full of all kinds of very elaborate cinematic stylization, some of which I had worked with on other films. Here I finally found

has such lousy emotional moments to it, because everyone's acting like they're in a circus due to the technology involved in putting things together. If you watch Hitchcock's movies, there's no razzle dazzle when you watch people talking to each other. It's very simple the way he shoots things. You want to look at the people and see what they're feeling, and the camera's just got to be in the place to do that. For example: the scene of Carrie flipping the ashtray, and the position of the ashtray in relationship to where she is, shooting up and down, and the P.O.V. shot of the ashtray.

"Every scene has a specific visual idea, some are very obvious like the slow motion for the prom; the 360-degree pan for when they're dancing. Those are quite blatant because they're obviously so unusual, but the key to making interesting movies is to do unusual things and make them fit in. I was working on that in OBSESSION, and hadn't really gotten it right. I was able to control it more on CARRIE.



You've got to have the right kind of scene to do that stuff; you just can't throw it in. I wasn't completely happy with the split-screen. I don't think it's as successful in *CARRIE* as it was in *SISTERS*, where the juxtaposition works quite well. You can't use split-screen for action, it's a mistake. It's too intellectual, it's too distancing a visual technique. In the prom scene I had a conceptual idea that Carrie looks and you see what she's seeing on one side of the screen. She looks and the doors close, and I thought that would justify it. But then I had a lot of action stuff to cut in, and it doesn't work. It's too much to watch at the same time. I'm attracted to excesses, if I can make them not become so that they blow out the whole material. That's always a problem. *CARRIE*'s one of the films it works best in.

"For the gym exercises, I devised a parallel tracking shot, showing them being driven into the ground, sticking their noses in the dirt, level by level. That's the idea for that scene and that's how it's shot, with the camera going by like a typewriter, and moving in closer and closer. The scene of Carrie coming out of the shower was done cinema verite, with a handheld camera just following her around to show what's happening within that space with those actors reacting to that emotion.

"For the tracking sequence at the entrance to the prom, again I like large tracking shots. I like to try to show the whole as a map of a battle. You want to show it all in a grand sweep. But a big shot can be sort of boring; it has to have some kind of mode of force to it. The helicopter shot you see from *DUEL AT DIABLO* on television that I used in the scene where Tommy consents to take Carrie to the prom is a really spectacular shot. I really love that shot. I like how it fits in with these people having a "canyon" between them, as a metaphor for them at opposite ends of the canyon—until he breaks down. That was about as much space as I could put between them in that little set.

"Again I used a tracing crane shot in the scene where the ballots are collected to establish where everything is. Starting with the ballot and ending with them winning. I'm really proud of that shot. It took me a long time to

all the detail to the shot.

"For Billy and Sissy dancing, that was just a matter of getting the camera to move around them as fast as we could and getting all the lights to work over top—so that you get it spinning so fast that it takes on an other-worldly aspect.

"The epilogue was something that occurred to me when I was trying to think of what the ending should be. I never thought it would be as effective as it was. But I think the reason it is so effective is because it's the third time I'd done that lyrical slow motion going into that kind of a jolt, and the audience is well keyed up for it, even though they're not aware that it's coming. They're kind of subconsciously keyed from the rest of the movie. I always try to do the unexpected.

"In the original screenplay, the White house is by the sea, and for the ending Carrie sinks down into the sand. I didn't feel that ending was all that effective. I thought, what are you going to see, someone being sucked up like a quicksand picture? I visualized it that way, but it just didn't do anything to me, so we just sank the whole house as a symbol of her bringing the world down upon herself. That was a better image for me. The sea swallowing her up just didn't have anything to do with that. It was a whole other vocabulary, really. It seemed really inappropriate to me—unless we had made a whole lot out of the sea, and worked that all the way through.

"I think that many people in the industry are not aware of style. I think that's why it took people so long to realize what a master Hitchcock was. They just thought he made thrillers or suspense pictures, and that was always a second-class genre. Nobody ever paid much attention to it, until he made them aware of it as an art form. Today, if you look at an old Hitchcock film, you think, "My God, how did everybody miss that?" And I think that's traditionally the problem with any really excellent stylistic direction, because if it's done badly they can just jump out at you and dominate the material to the point where there's no material left. To me, the best stylistic direction is that which you're not aware of at all.

"I found out through the screenings that

devices that I saw in older films. The fact is symphonically scored films sort of went out in the sixties when pop music came in and people were using it to sell records. Consequently, the symphonic composers went on the shelf for awhile. I reached back for Hermann with *SISTERS*, and then a lot of other young directors who had loved those scores and wondered what had happened to the symphonic composers wanted to do that also. I would say between myself, Scorsese, Spielberg, and Lucas, we almost brought the symphonic score back. Johnny Williams is sort of a contemporary Hermann. I think he's the foremost film composer of our day, and he's a great admirer of Hermann. I think the *STAR WARS* and *JAWS* scores are terrific. The Hermann scores for *SISTERS*, *OBSESSION* and *TAXI DRIVER* are terrific. These are the composers who have always been great, and it was just a matter of the directors letting them do what they've always done so well.

"A movie has so many elements in it. It's so complicated, that I think most people are intimidated by it, and just pick up a script and just direct what's there on the page, and hope the editor will put it all together for them. That's the trouble with most movies. Most movies have no real form to them. They're just a series of scenes, and that's not a movie to me. It's not even touching the surface. To me, a movie is very much like a scored piece of music. You have visual ideas that you recapitulate, images that you play contrapuntally, passages, movements, themes, and a big finish. I see it very much in those terms. I lay a movie out like it is scored. And with my films, it allows a composer to see that shape, and it fits right in to how they think. I think that's why my films are always so well scored."

## cinematographer Mario Tosi

"I started from scratch—no school, nothing. I had an artistic background and came to the U.S. as a painter. I found that after I under-



figure it out, and place everything and get it to work. And it works. It's hard to make those shots work at that length. The biggest difficulty for me in getting it to work was getting the rise to work, and not have it shake every time we came to it. When Sue enters from behind the stage, and the camera begins to rise and go along the rope—right before that we come to a stop. It's an immense crane, and we'd stop in the wrong position and go up in the wrong position. Then we couldn't get over to where the bucket was in relationship to looking straight down, and then pan off and see them in the background. It was mainly the wobble there that took us take after take to get right, and get that big machine just in the right spot. Don Heitzer was really good in getting the crowd movement in just the right places. A good crane tracking shot should not self-consciously call attention to itself. You get sucked up into what it's showing you, and then if you see it again and again, you begin to see

some people were confused as to whether Sue was involved in the plot against Carrie. But if you're watching the picture closely, it isn't confusing. Obviously she's trying to do one thing, and they're trying to do something else. When Chris is plotting with Billy, Sue is pushing Tommy to ask Carrie, and just by the juxtaposition of those scenes, some people see it as both of the girls conspiring to bring Carrie down. But it certainly isn't there. It's only guilt by association, I guess, that makes it appear that way.

"I'm very interested in non-verbal cinema and I very much rely on music to invest it with a kind of emotional texture—with almost a whole character of itself played against the visual aspects of a scene. The more movies I make, the more I try to make them exist in a kind of non-verbal universe. So I rely very strongly on the composer to make an extension of that world in sound. I don't think I did anything really too remarkable in relying on the



stood and learned the mechanical end of photography, it was instinctive and very simple to me. That's why when I see a bad lighting job, something with no taste and flat, like some things on TV, I resent it. It's not that difficult, with a little bit of will power and taste, to do a good, artistic job. I realized that good camera work was just a matter of applying good taste to the framework. After 20 years I still build my lighting to the camera—looking to the set and the people moving on the set. Many people do a pre-lighting, but I have to light after I have a setup from the director, and so build up the shadow and the mood from the story requirements. On TV everything is supposed to be shown, and flashy lighting is put everywhere so that all the mood disappears. There is mood everywhere, and I like to under-light to bring out the softness and beauty that is already there.

"I really enjoyed working with Brian DePalma. He has a lot of good, creative ideas—





Preparing for another go 'round during filming of Scene 190 are dolly grip Kenny Miller, first assistant camera operator Dusty Blauvelt, and camera operator Joe King.



Scene 190 as it appears on screen as a lyrical realization of Carrie's dream-come-true.



Don Heitzer (L) and DePalma.



Director DePalma.

sometimes they're too good, because they're so difficult to execute. The hardest part of it is to take those fantastic ideas and put them in the frame. The more difficult it gets, the more creative challenge there is for me. I enjoy working with a director like Brian who doesn't play with the camera and leaves me to work it out myself.

"As a director, Brian doesn't talk much. It's tough for a cameraman, because the director's idea is one thing, and applying it to the camera is another. We would discuss a shot, and sometimes I'd look through the camera to see if we could do it. Sometimes it would be so difficult and involved it was almost impossible. The shot that I really enjoyed very much was the one in the gym with Sissy and Billy dancing. That was a beautiful shot. They were dancing in one direction under the chandelier and the camera was going the other way. We were running so fast with the camera at the end of that scene that Brian couldn't keep up. We had to run because it was a 360-degree shot. We went around 10 or 15 times, and each turn was faster and faster. When we finally got the shot, Joe King, the operator, just rolled off the dolly over onto the floor. We all had spinning heads.

"Another very involved and difficult shot to stage was the crane shot starting at Billy and Sissy's table with the girl taking votes at the

Prom. I wonder how many people in the audience knew how difficult it was. The shot of the dancing is obvious, but only someone who knows about camera work and directing would realize how much effort the crane shot would take. We used stage lighting for the interior of the gym and put colors over them the way kids would do. A lot of color was put on the 10K's and 5K's that I had way up on top of the gym. We actually photographed them when we shot Billy and Carrie dancing. Jack Fisk had asked: 'How can you photograph a 10K so that it won't look like a motion picture stage?' I told him you wouldn't see the lights; you'd only see the dots of red and blue. And it turned out well and very effective, because we shot right into them.

"The interior shot of the gym on fire was really tough on Sissy. When she goes through the flames to the door—the second time through the heat was really intense. I wish we could have had another day to shoot it, because I wanted more people and much more flame in the foreground. In that scene after the fire starts, almost as soon as people start screaming, they all disappear and the foreground of the master is all empty. I suggested to Brian that we shoot it again, but we didn't have the money or time to do it. But it turned out OK.

"All in all, the production was relatively free of problems. The only thing that really effected

my performance was a scene in Carrie's room that was ultimately cut. Brian had a really good idea for when her mother comes into Carrie's room and Sissy starts running around the place. Brian wanted the camera to go 360 degrees in the small room—which was hardly 5 feet wide. We had to put in a camera, the operator, assistant operator, me, plus Sissy, Piper, Brian, the assistant director and the script girl. We were to model all the shadows without seeing any of the lights. Plus, it had a really low ceiling. So I had to start hiding lights behind books, shelves, glass, and we and Sissy all ran around the room. It was crazy. After all that, it was cut—I'll never know why. I saw it in the dailies and it was beautiful.

"The closet was much easier to shoot. It was so small we couldn't get the camera in, so that was shot from outside and we pretended that the door was closed behind us. It was lit with very little light: nothing really, a little light from a crack in the staircase, but mostly just a touch of light in order to see something.

"The shot I really enjoyed was when Piper stabs Sissy, and she rolls down the stairs into the kitchen, and through her telekinetic powers, crucifies her mother. That was one of the most beautiful shots—and I only wish the printing would have been the way I photographed it.

"One thing about CARRIE I'd like to mention is that after the film was finished and I had





William Katt looks on as DePalma gives Sissy Spacek directions for the next sequence.



After her telepathic attack upon her schoolmates, Carrie wanders through the hellish remains of the gymnasium.



Mario Tosi filming the point-of-view shot of Carrie backing away from her attacking mother.



Piper Laurie, cinematographer Mario Tosi, and Sissy Spacek.

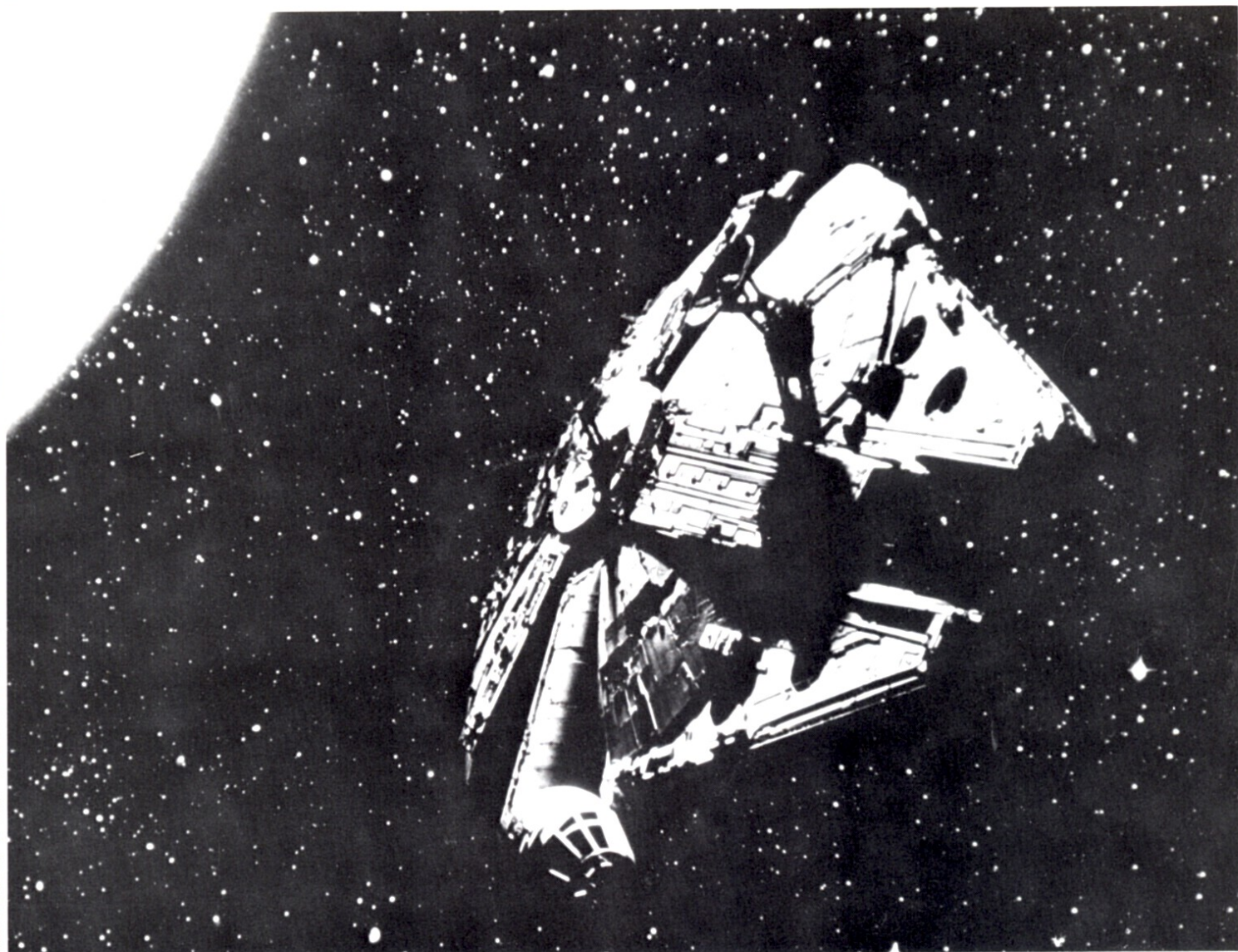
gone to work on MacARTHUR, they asked me to do the timing on CARRIE. The timing is the lighting balance that is done when the film is cut together. It effects the mood. As I was busy, I couldn't do it. The timing on CARRIE was not quite the way I photographed the film. I shot the scene where Carrie's mother gets stabbed in very, very warm lighting—like a Dutch painting—really orange and deep with a lot of diffusion. But in the printing, they took out all the deep orange.

"I'm very instinctive in my work. I light it as I see it, and I don't pre-plan. I, of course, study the story, so that when we get to a shot, I have an idea. We stage the shot into the camera and set it into the frame, then looking into the frame, I start building up the mood of the set with more lighting or lower lighting, color and shadow—until the mood is right.

"I don't want to be negative about the importance a lot of people give to lenses, cameras, and technical gadgets, because I said before—anyone is a cameraman. To me a camera is only a machine that photographs whatever you do; so the important thing is not the camera or the lens. The camera is only as good as what you are giving to it. If the composition and lighting are bad and you use a gold-plated camera, they are still bad. Some people always want a big Panavision camera, and then they can't do a damned lighting job! If the taste and sensitivity a cameraman applies is good, then the image will be good. We are also lucky to have such good film today. You can do anything with it. Today, the technology is so perfected, all you need is good taste and an eye for the lighting." □







# STAR WARS ENCOUNTERED

by Eric Hoffman

On May 25, 1977, in approximately 50 theaters throughout the country, George Lucas' long-awaited STAR WARS was first screened. What has happened since then has turned into one of the most incredible bits of social phenomena since STAR TREK evolved into an international mania, or JAWS scared the hell out of audiences and made a bundle.

On the critical front, with very few exceptions, STAR WARS captured the kudos of the usually eager-to-maim scribes. It was almost a little frightening to find the trade papers (*Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, for example), guarded-with-their-praise magazines (*Newsweek* and *Time*) and newspapers generally sporting reviews that ranged from very good to zealously enthusiastic.

What this all boiled down to is that the nation had been captured by an out-and-out pure (or almost) science-fantasy adventure, or

space opera, that is a mind-staggering effects bonanza and probably one of the fullest homages to all the moments of delight that made movies such a special joy in an earlier era. One of the plus factors that had made the picture such an "overnight" success is that it had been shorn of heavy philosophizing, psychological trimmings and "true-to-life" images that seemed to be strangling the screen.

To anyone with even the slightest knowledge of past films, it is more than obvious that director/author Lucas harbors a definite fondness for old serials (i.e., BUCK ROGERS and FLASH GORDON), pulp space epics and the science-fiction films of the fifties. His opening sets the tone of the film, getting right into the middle of things with a synopsis that moves away from the screen into infinity—a flavor of the recap titles used by Universal in their serials of the late thirties and early forties. There's the tip-off for all to see: telling the audience to unfasten its sophistication, sus-

pend disbelief and become kids again for about two hours—to possibly discover the special feeling of make-believe that seems to have been erased from the young in this tension-filled world. Before STAR WARS is five minutes gone you know you're a passenger on a ride to a future where bizarre aliens are an everyday sight, where robots can have minds of their own and where a villain who plans to conquer a galaxy doesn't operate from a single palace on a foreboding chunk of rock using a mere handful of ships and soldiers—rather he builds the biggest battle station-cum-spaceship imaginable, capable of pulverizing whole worlds with the flick of a button.

There have been some critics who have complained that the characters of STAR WARS are one-dimensional figures, lacking deep or relevant motivation that gives any depth to their actions. But they have missed the point totally. Young Luke Skywalker is a composite of impulsive youth and Jack the Giant Killer. As for



motivation: What better motivation can you have than to avenge the only family you ever had (besides learning that your father was a Jedi Knight)? As the heroine, Princess Leia Organa is not exactly your shrinking violet-type of damsel in distress. She can handle a laser pistol with the best of them. One wonders what she could have done with a light saber. Han Solo, the hot-shot starship pilot and parttime smuggler, seems to be a composite of the "lady-killer" sidekick character, with a liberal dash of Clint Eastwood self-confident macho and Bogart's "Rick" from CASABLANCA. His attitude is very reminiscent of Rick's snarled code: "I don't stick out my neck for nobody."

The villains are portrayed in the best adventure tradition. They are ruthless, rotten, nasty, cold and cruel—but with a certain "charm" of their own. The kind of charm exercised by a cobra upon its victim. Grand Moff Tarkin is an individual reminiscent in methods and ruthlessness of Prince John from the Errol Flynn version of ROBIN HOOD. His callous disregard for human lives in order to achieve his own ends is of such a level as to make him a top contender for nasty of the year. Right along him in ruthlessness is his strong-arm man—or as they say in serial vernacular: "The first man through the door"—Lord Darth Vader, the renegade Jedi Knight whose treachery has brought about the destruction of that noble brotherhood.

The character of Ben Kenobi, former Jedi and now a reclusive desert dweller, provides the level head among all the action—kind of a father figure (a la Dr. Zarkov to Flash Gordon). Still maintaining his belief in the tradition of the Jedi Knights, as well as his firm faith in "The Force," Ben Kenobi comes across as one of the most interesting of the human characters.

The two robots, Artoo-Detoo and his fussy companion, See-Threepio, have developed a following all their own, with feelings equally divided between the small, stubby 'droid (whose language consists of electronic bleeps, bleeps, squawks, with an occasional electronic razzberry thrown in for good measure) and C3-PO. In R2-D2 there is a reminder of the drones from SILENT RUNNING who had captured the attention and affection of the audience. C3-PO is almost the equivalent of every fuss-budget-worry-wart character who ever provided comedy relief in a film. He is sort of a mechanical Edward Everett Horton or Franklin Pangborn, for those who revel in the old comedies. His physical appearance definitely is, as many have observed, a tribute to the Tin Woodman from WIZARD OF OZ, a mite more streamlined, yet coming across as a very human figure, right down to his concern for his shorter sidekick.

The third non-human who has become a favorite with audiences is Chewbacca, the giant 8-foot tall hair-covered Wookiee, whose face is a delightful cross between that of a human, a monkey—and a dash of cat. "Chewie" has become equated with another Oz character, the Cowardly Lion. Only his fierceness is not a bluff. He's quite fearless, powerful, etc.—as long as he knows what he's up against. But when confronted by the unknown (as in the sequence within the huge garbage masher inside the Death Star) he's a full-fledged cousin to Bert Lahr's comedic creation.

As Luke Skywalker, Mark Hamill is a bit too callow or "gosh, wow" as Luke in the beginning, but develops into a hero-type in a style every one of us has imagined ourselves doing when engrossed in the latest galactic thriller or while vicariously riding the stars with Flash. Harrison Ford is properly self-confident as Solo, yet not so macho that he would have been an unsympathetic character. In the end he upholds the viewer's secret wish that beneath his "I'm for me first" attitude he is a right guy when it comes to Luke's rescue—all in the best tradition of the cinematic Seventh Cavalry.

Alec Guinness stands alone as Ben Kenobi. This remarkable British actor, knighted for his performing achievements, makes the part his own, endowing it with dignity, bravery and a special other-worldly quality, topped with a dash of humor. Peter Cushing got a chance to play one of his few unsympathetic heavies, a contrast to his usual parts, where even at his nastiest he has a good point or two. Cushing's Tarkin is truly a man you love to hate.

It is difficult to give credit regarding the character of Darth Vader. Beneath the fearsome costume and grotesque insect-like breathing mask, three-time British weight-lifting champion David Prowse provided the physical



An X-wing pilot dives into the Death Star trench.



A blast from an attacking TIE ship shakes the Millennium Falcon knocking C-3PO into a tangle of crackling electric cables.

essence... (Prowse has appeared in many fantasy and terror films. He was the executioner in PEOPLE THAT TIME FORGOT.) Vader's voice was courtesy of James Earl Jones, a fact that was intended to be secret. The combination has worked beyond expectations, with Vader becoming one of the most popular nasties since Ming the Merciless.

For sheer endurance, the kudos certainly go to the three main non-humans: C3-PO (Anthony Daniels), R2-D2 (Kenny Baker) and Chewbacca (Peter Mayhew). One can only imagine the discomfort, heat and exhaustion they endured within their remarkable suits; particularly Mayhew, buried under all that fur and intricate makeup.

The music, composed by John Williams and performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, was magnificently derivative of some of the great film adventure scores by such masters as Korngold, Steiner, Young, Tiomkin—with a dash of Waxman thrown in. The score was in total keeping with the aura it was trying to evoke. Smoothly flowing between the thrilling and dramatic as well as the sentimental, Williams' score is a solid, multi-layered whole which provides a foundation that involves the audience into the spirit of the film.

But it is the visual aspect that is at the heart of it all, proving that STAR WARS is a celebration not only of innocence, but of the visual.

The aliens are just brought into the story, in keeping with Lucas' idea to present the future as if we were familiar with it. There is no shock surprise cut to one of these beings. They are part of the world as if we have always known them. One of the most memorable moments in the film is the cantina sequence in which Ben and Luke find themselves in a dive literally filled with alien beings of every size, shape and description. (A few of them defy description.) Much of the credit for this remarkable segment goes to Rick Baker. How he managed to come up with such remarkable work is a mystery. But what does count is that this scene ranks as one of the highlights of the film.

STAR WARS' effect on 20th Century-Fox is obvious. There were some executives who felt embarrassment by their reported initial lack of faith in the film. Its success did vindicate production chief Alan Ladd Jr.'s faith and also took the studio by surprise. Needless to say, Fox's stock rose sharply on Wall Street and became a hot item on the Market.

The STAR WARS fever shows little sign of abating and, frankly, that seems to be a healthy sign. Here is audience devotion to a picture that is "high" on justice, the nobility of man and the concept that right will win out. George Lucas' devotion to his production has paid off in more ways than can be imagined. You could say that "The Force" was with him—all the way. □



## early Star Wars

STAR WARS, boxoffice-wise the most popular movie of all time, might never have been made but for the reputation of director George Lucas. Alan Ladd Jr. saw AMERICAN GRAFFITI one morning in May of 1973. The then vice-president of creative affairs was sufficiently impressed by Lucas' directorial work to telephone him that afternoon. Ladd recalls, "I told him I wanted very much to do something with him. Did he have any ideas? He said he had an idea called STAR WARS, but nothing on paper. We agreed to pay him about \$15,000 to do a screenplay."

By the end of that May, Lucas submitted his first story outline to the 12 members of the Fox board. They agreed to commit \$8.5 million to the project based on Lucas' reputation, his story and Ladd's convictions that they were on to the makings of something big. A look at the very first concepts, set down by Lucas in his 12½ page treatment, is quite fascinating.

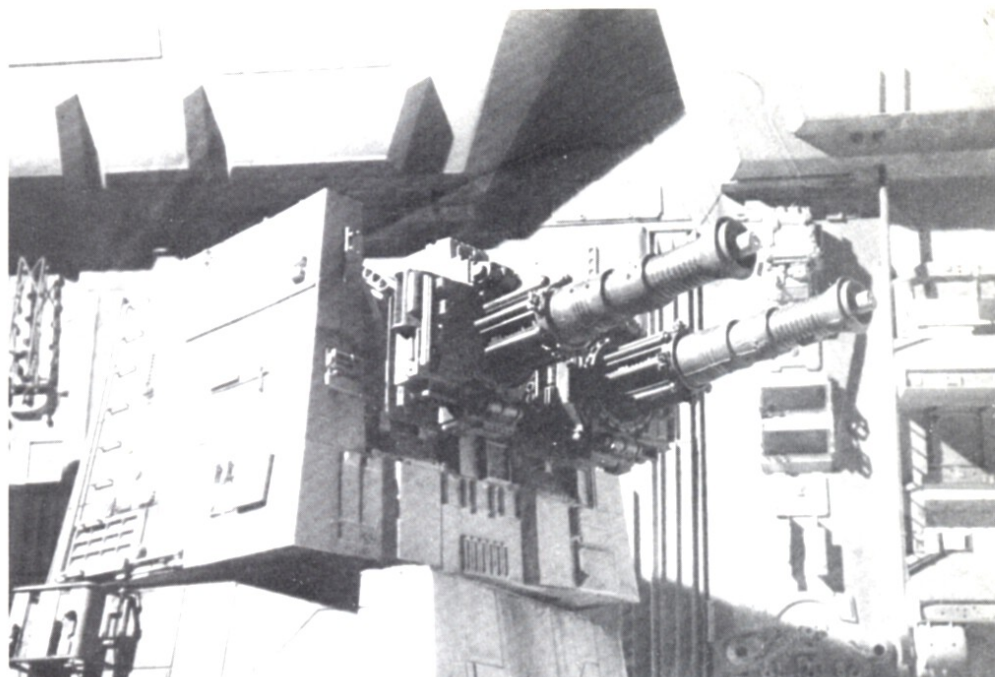
The time of great civil wars in the galaxy is the 33rd Century. Above the eerie green planet Aquilae, a gargantuan space fortress is attacked by six small Imperial fighter ships. Aboard the fortress is a rebel princess, her family and the clan treasure. She is guarded by one of her generals, Luke Skywalker. (In Lucas' original treatment, Skywalker assumes the commanding role which later evolved into Ben Kenobi.) This brave band has been successfully fighting its way across enemy territory. Their cargo also includes 200 pounds of valuable "aura spice" and two captured Imperial bureaucrats. The captives, a constantly bickering duo, are prototypes of the characters who eventually evolved into R2-D2 and C3-PO. Although initially prisoners, they eventually switch sides and fight alongside Skywalker.

On Aquilae, the princess and Skywalker, disguised as farmers, and the two bureaucrats, begin traveling in land speeders to the space port city of Gordon, where they hope to locate a spaceship that will take them to the friendly planet of Ophuchi. They are attacked along the way by an Imperial patrol, which proves to be no match for Skywalker. They proceed onward, low on food and water, through a terrible storm until they arrive at the ruins of an ancient temple. There they discover a rebel band of ten teenage boys who are planning an attack on one of the Imperial fortresses. Against the protests of Skywalker, the boys join the princess and her group on the journey across the wasteland. The boys prove their worth to the skeptical general one night as they save the group from an attacking giant beast of the plains.

The general, a bureaucrat and one of the boys, in search of a rebel spacecraft, enter a cantina full of exotic aliens in the spaceport city of Gordon. Skywalker's deft use of his laser sword puts a quick end to several bullies who had made the mistake of taunting the boy. The newly regrouped party secures a rebel spacecraft, but as they approach it, they find themselves in an Imperial ambush. They all narrowly escape in a space fighter.

A raging air-to-air battle and chase takes place in outer space between Skywalker's space fighter and a fleet of Imperial ships. The boys' respect for Skywalker continues to grow as they witness his skill in battle. As they elude their attackers, the fighter is crippled and explodes above the forbidden planet of Yavin—although they all jetson safely away at the last minute. When they regroup and set up camp, only two of the rebel boys can be located. Skywalker, the princess and their two bureaucrats (still bearing the load of "aura spice") set off for what appears to be a city. The two boys set off to find their missing companions.

Riding "jet-sticks" fashioned from their rescue packs, Skywalker and party are attacked by a group of aliens riding large birdlike creatures. The aerial battle that ensues ends with Skywalker as the victor. However, the momentum of the "jet-stick" has carried him through the gate of the enemy camp of the aliens. Within the camp Skywalker must fight one of the leaders. In winning he cuts the alien in half with his laser sword. The aliens become a frenzied mob and throw Luke down a 1,000-foot crevasse into a boiling lake.



One of the battery of laser-cannons that protects the Death Star's equator.



Location filming in Southern Tunisia, on the edge of the Sahara Desert.

The rest of the party, depressed by Skywalker's sure death, are imprisoned in a hut. Unknown to them, he had broken his fall by grabbing a hanging vine and swinging to safety. During a rescue attempt of his party, Skywalker encounters the other alien leader—who apparently has wanted to help them all along. He leads Luke to a clearing where they witness a group of Imperial men trading with the aliens for possession of the princess and two bureaucrats. The alien takes Luke to a farm where the boy rebels have all gathered. With the aid of a cantankerous old farmer, Skywalker carries out an attack on the small Imperial outpost where his friends are being held, only to find that the princess has been taken to Alderaan, capital of the Empire. Skywalker trains the band of boys in the use of one-man devil fighter craft stationed at the captured outpost. Then they take off for the heart of the

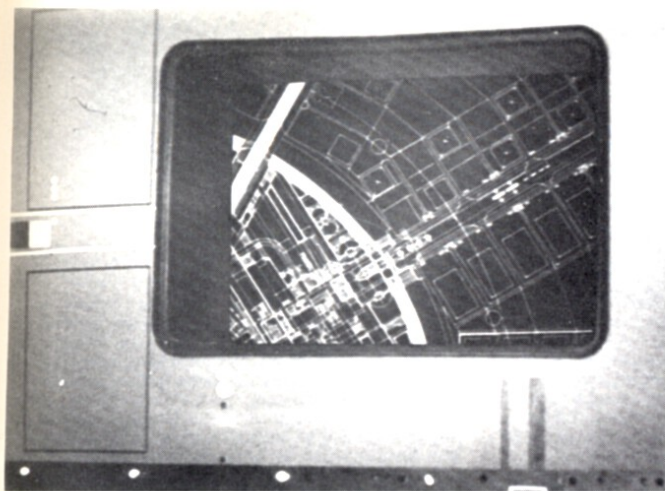
Empire at the center of the galaxy.

The small armada flies right into the awesome city-planet of Alderaan (the early equivalent of the Death Star). Disguised as Imperial rangers, the group surmounts a series of difficult barriers to free the princess from the prison complex. A great multiple laser-gun and sword battle breaks out as the rebels flee. A few of the boys are killed, but the rest escape after breaking through a ring of Imperial ships.

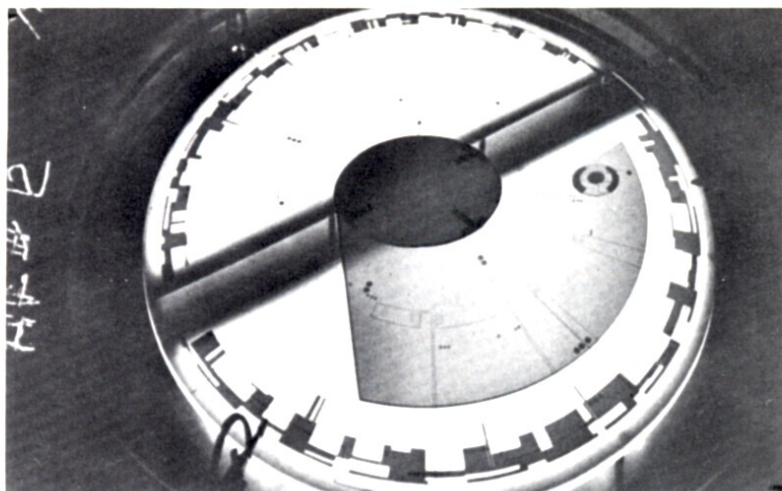
On Ophuchi, a huge parade honors general Skywalker and his small band. The bureaucrats are rewarded by the princess' uncle, the ruler of Ophuchi, and the boy rebels join her special guard.

After the ceremony and the festivities have ended, the drunken bureaucrats stumble down an empty street arm in arm—realizing that they have been adventuring with demigods! □





The monitor readout screen in the command office on the Death Star.



The central tracking screen at the rebel base War Room.

# INTERVIEW: JOHN WASH

## Star Wars graphics

Interview conducted by Scot Holton

From playing rocketship in his Minnesota backyard as a child, John Wash's great interest in fantasy films and dramatics lead him to producing films in high school, experimental theater, and then to live action films at the University of Southern California, specializing in animation and special effects. While at USC, Wash came in contact with John Carpenter and Dan O'Bannon and their project, *DARK STAR*. His work on the computer screens, control panel readouts, and astroid animation for that film was to eventually lead him to special effects work on *STAR WARS*.

"In the fall of 1975, when I was working as an animator at Universal Studios, Jimmy House, an animator I had worked with, told me that a friend of his was working on a film called *STAR WARS*—and that they were looking for animators. Jim and I and Jay Teitzel (an assistant editor at Universal), decided to get our best work together and submit it to George Lucas. One day in October I went down to this funny little studio where Lucas was casting for the film and talked to him about what he had in mind for the animation. I had never met George Lucas before and was very impressed by his cool and calm, as well as his knowledge of exactly what he wanted to get for the film and his understanding of the technical problems of achieving it. We bid on the project and came up

with an initial bid for all the animation of \$26,000.

"Basically, he wanted factual, nondescript animation—not something that would scream its presence at the camera—something that looked integrated with reality. The targeting devices of the ships weren't designed to look flashy or bizarre. They looked functional and worked well—like a toaster or a radar screen.

"Lucas decided to go with a guy named Larry Cuba who had come out of Cal Arts. The next I heard of *STAR WARS* was about May 1976. While they were shooting, they had forgotten to include a couple of displays they needed in England to complete the work they were doing there. They had just forgotten to pull them out of the script, budget them and assign them. As a result, the shots had to be done right away. I got a call and was asked to do them. The scenes involved computer views of the planet Yavin. They gave me two pages of the script, which made no sense at all. We were to shoot Yavin itself and then individual shots of the four moons. We generated the art by actually painting a globe white and putting graphic information on it: contour lines, squares, grids, type, and things like that. Then we took various high contrast photos of the globe. What we got of that was a still image of the planet, of the graphics on it; but the graphics were given the curvature of the planet. The globe was invisible to the high contrast

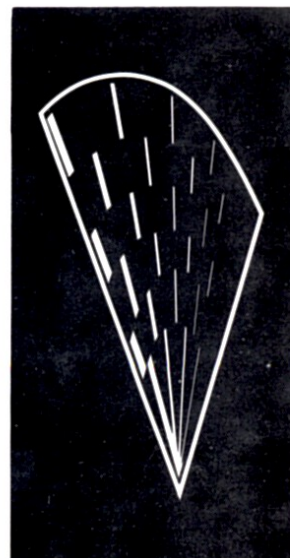
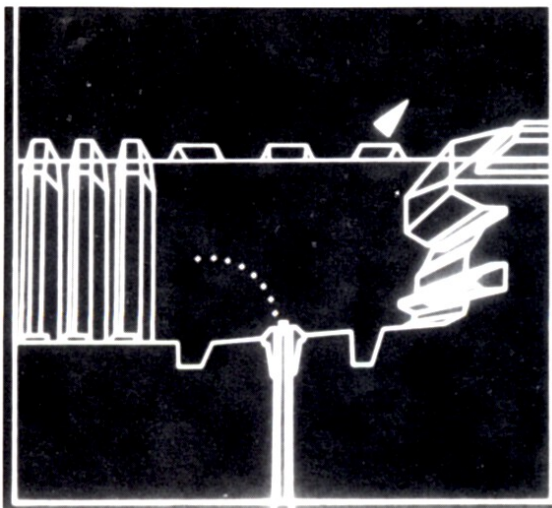
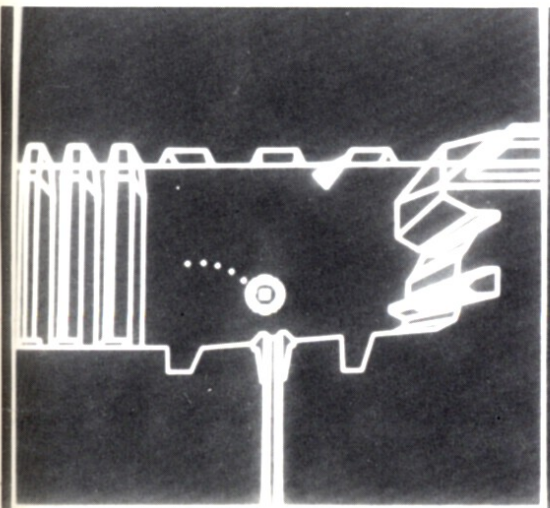
film.

"The other scene was the one where Luke and Leia were being tracked through the interior of the Death Star, which involved a three-dimensional see-through schematic with a little target element moving down different corridors. Those scenes were shot and sent off to England before I had a chance to see the dailies. When something was wrong, they'd have to explain it verbally, which was often very confusing.

"In September Dan O'Bannon called to tell me that he had been called in to do the scene with the chess game in Solo's spaceship. They wanted a holographic chess game, but since it had already been done in *FUTUREWORLD*, they wanted something different. So I started thinking about it and reading about fencing—I thought it might be a neat game to play in space. But the next thing I heard they had gotten someone else to do that scene.

"Later Dan told me that they needed someone to do scenes that would be projected on panels and scopes. As he was describing them to me, I realized that they were practically all the scenes that we had originally bid on earlier. Apparently Larry Cuba was still doing a complex shot involving flying down toward the surface of the Death Star and then turning around. Lucas envisioned the shot as a completely continuous one—flying into a detailed area of the Death Star, turning around and

Two frames of the animation sequence that appears on the War Room screen illustrating the small thermal exhaust port into which an X-wing pilot must drop a photon torpedo. The small triangle represents a space ship.





flying straight down the trench, reaching the shaft, then pulling out and flying away from it. Larry produced that in Illinois at a computer animation facility at the University of Illinois. At that time the Death Star hadn't even been completely designed. They were feeding Larry drawings and photographs as they came up; as each new element was designed. He worked exactly the same way they made the models for the Death Star—on a modular basis. He had building blocks that were covered with the same base, but had different detailing on them. By manipulating these blocks he was able to create the surface of the Death Star to the specifications that were sent to him.

"I left Universal to work on STAR WARS, doing the shots that Dan had called me about. The shots we worked on included Luke's electrobinoculars; the computer screen in the Death Star where Artoo-Detoo searches out the power source for the tractor beam; tracking screens on the Millennium Falcon's guns when they escape the Death Star; targeting devices for the X-wing and Tie fighters; the large screen on the Death Star when they're watching Yavin; the computer targeting device as they're ready to drop the bomb on the Death Star; and the scene in the briefing room which hooks up with Larry Cuba's animation. There was also a shot that they didn't use which involved a device that Luke used to trace Artoo-Detoo from his rocket car which was called the Land Speeder Radar.

"The attack we used was fairly similar to that done on DARK STAR. This was basically generating imagery from bottom-lit artwork which was generated conventionally on standard animation cranes. Because things were in such a rush, we'd be briefed on what the shot was to be, we'd make some preliminary sketches, then take them out and meet with Lucas. We usually gave him a number of different possibilities and asked him to choose, comment or suggest a direction he wanted to go in. We'd have our favorites, and usually he'd pick those—which was really nice. I don't think there was anything he really didn't like. I got a few sketches from him—not his own personal sketches—but things that had been worked out by someone else. He makes no pretense about being an artist or draftsman; he just wanted us to be acquainted with whatever was required. Usually we were presented with a problem verbally, and we had to come up with a graphic solution. Basically, he would sketch out the basic shape of the screen or show us a clip of the screen we were supposed to fill. In the case of the circular screen in the Death Star where they are looking down at the rebel base, I was given a clip of that scene. Since the effect was to be laid over a live action background, all the shapes of the graphics were determined by the shape and perspective of the screen.

"In the briefing room scene we had to show a section of the trench of the Death Star, a symbol of the fighter which drops a little bomb with the camera following it as it goes down the trench. Meanwhile, the camera is pulling back on the Death Star. As the bomb reaches the bottom of the trench, the

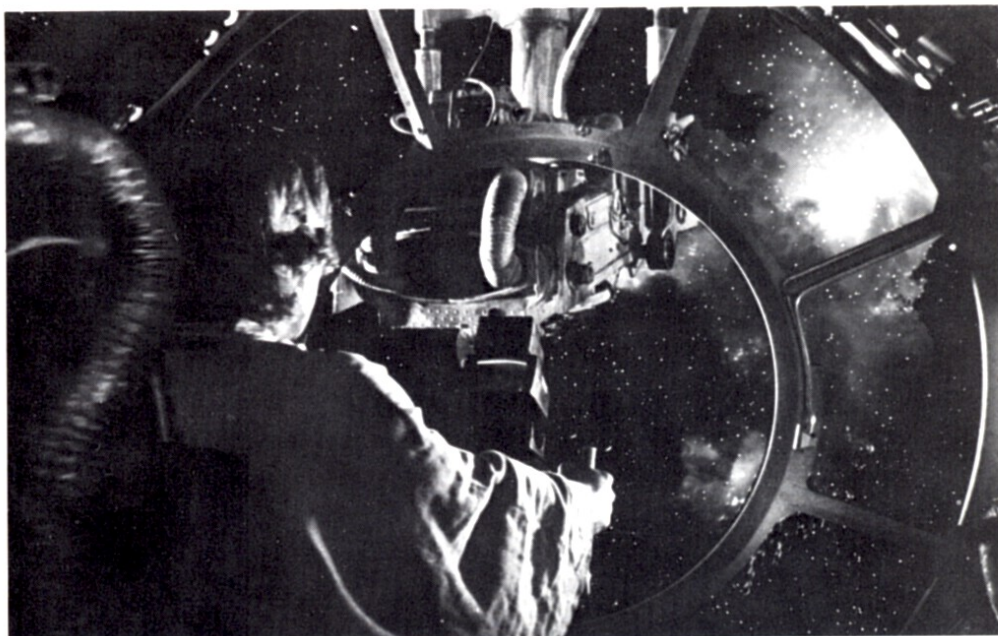
camera pulls back to reveal the whole Death Star and the explosion symbol is shown. The basic problem with that scene was producing a zoom that was convincing. We were moving from a ten-story section of the Death Star and pulling back to something the size of a small planetoid. I'm not sure what kind of a ratio that would be, but I decided to do it as three separate shots and then combine them. Most of the problems were in the calculations; lines not matching each other correctly. You'd introduce a line of one size and reduce it down optically. It would become so much thinner in reduction that another line would look like a fat monster next to it.

"One of the fun things about STAR WARS was some of Lucas' concepts for the film. For instance, he thought there should be absolutely no roman lettering in the film—as there was to be no reference to us or our world. He felt it was OK to show numbers; but we wanted some additional graphics. So we developed our own alien alphabet. We took a type face called "Mirage" which had a lot of interlocking units. We'd cut out little pieces of these letters and made a whole alien calligraphy with endless possibilities. It pops up on the Imperial wall screen and on the Imperial targeters also.

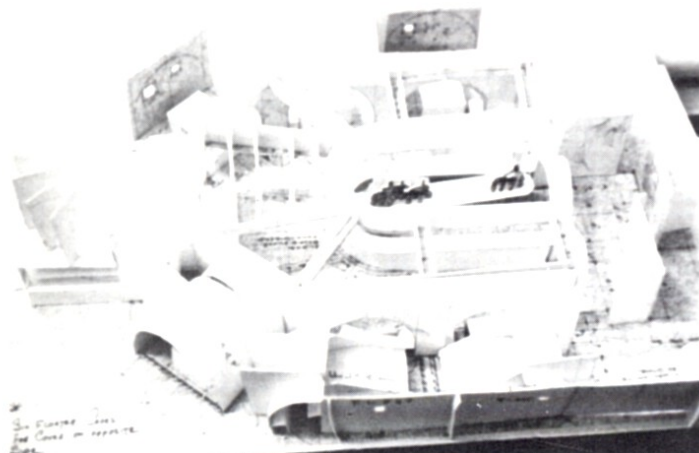
"I first became aware of what a special film STAR WARS was going to be the first time I went out to Industrial Light & Magic to work on the footage that was being sent to England. They had things going on out there that really amazed me even though they hadn't built the

Dykstraflex yet. They had just started to build the trench of the Death Star. John Dykstra had collected a whole crew of incredible people from Industrial Design where he was teaching, as well as people from Pal arts. Adam Becket was working on the beams, rays and explosion enhancement and Greg Auer did the explosions. They were a whole bunch of top-notch people who had new ideas on how to do the special effects. Even though the film was sci-fi and was supposed to be a fantasy, people were thinking about things logically. How would a ray gun really look? All the equipment was to look used. That was really a turnaround—Stanley Kubrick's sterile 2001 and Lucas' used, makeshift STAR WARS. The first time I heard about the ray guns I was told that they would look like the gun flares from the "G.I. Joe" comics of the fifties where flame flared out at the muzzle and then tapered off to a straight, thin ray.

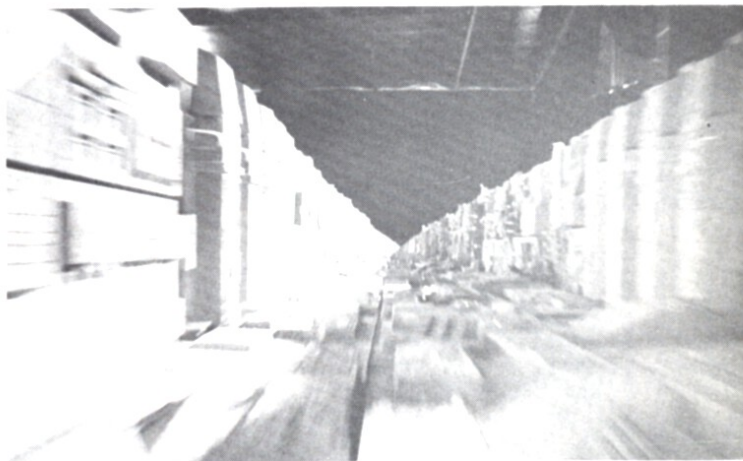
"I was kept in the dark regarding the plot of the film. I tried to find out enough so that I could do the job, but didn't want to inhibit myself by knowing what was going on in the film every second. I was a lot freer to create without that knowledge. I knew that it was to be such a special film that I wanted to be able to see it without going to the dailies. Being exposed to the people at ILM I could see that there were people who really cared—and that STAR WARS was going to be a very special kind of a film. □



Luke scans the heavens with the laser canon in search of attacking TIE fighters.



One of the numerous paper models of the sets used to guide in the construction of the full-sized versions.



A view looking down the Death Star's equatorial trench, as photographed by the Dykstraflex camera before additional elements (spaceships, stars) have been added. The basic surface contours of the Death Star were created from six different vacuum-formed squares constructed of durable polyurethane foam.



# DENNIS MUREN

"When I was seven years old, I saw *THE BEAST FROM 2,000 FATHOMS* and, of course, all those films like it that were being made at that time. I was quite taken by the spectacle of these kinds of films, and by stop-motion especially. I saw *KING KONG* a little later and I thought it was so real, so striking that I didn't want to see it a second time. It would be too frustrating, not knowing how it was made. But when I saw *THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* when I was older—which wasn't quite up to the technical level of *KONG*—there were enough "give-away" things going on with the effects that I began to think that maybe I could do something like that on my own. I will always have a lot of respect for Ray Harryhausen. His films have consistently excellent, spectacular effects, and yet he's had hardly any money to work with. The entire effects budget for *7th VOYAGE OF SINBAD* was less than one week's budget on Dino DeLaurenti's *KING KONG* effects."

With his initial interest sparked by the effects-filled films created by Ray Harryhausen, Muren turned to experimenting with his own 8mm home movies. High-speed explosions, dams breaking, magic, miniatures, stop-motion animation numbered among a variety of effects techniques he explored with, first, his 8mm and then his 16mm camera. "They didn't teach any of these things in high school. When I went to college, I wasn't interested in the film schools and what they were teaching. I was more attracted to the use of effects, so I felt the schools didn't have that much to offer. Now I think a bit differently."

"I also regarded my effects work at the time as kind of a personal thing between my friends and I. Putting it on a level in a school situation—where someone could rate it B or A or whatever—I felt that that type of appraisal shouldn't matter. Consequently, all my experience came from movies I made on my own and not from a school."

"My parents wanted me to major in business, so I majored in business advertising. I found that was quite a help, because you have to have some sort of perspective as you work, regarding the practical side of business: You've got to know how to meet deadlines; you've got to be aware of costs and that sort of thing."

Muren was fortunate to grow up with a group of dynamically talented friends—individuals like David Allen and Jim Danforth and others; a group of people who have become a major force in the "new Hollywood." "We all went through the same schools together. I met Jim when I was about 15. We were each into this freaky hobby, living so close to each other and never even knowing each other. It was really something! I got invited by Phil Kellison, who moved in down the block from me, to see the work in progress on *JACK THE GIANT KILLER* at Project Unlimited... and walking in there was like seeing your dreams come true, with rear projection techniques and foam rubber puppets being used by the people there. The puppets didn't look as good as *SINBAD*'s, but it was still a big event! Jim was working on the animation and that's how we met."

"I directed *EQUINOX* when I was just starting college. Instead of investing in going to a private college, I spent the money making my own film that could act as a showcase for effects. *EQUINOX* went on for about two years during which time I also did some commercial work for Cascade Studios and Phil Kellison; simple stop-motion type things."

"After that I did two educational films for Charles Cahill about the universe which were shot in 16mm color. These entailed about 120 effects shots of planets, nebulae, solar systems and so forth. *THE UNIVERSE: FLIGHT TO THE STARS* was like Cahill's version of the Canadian film *THE UNIVERSE* that had been shot years before. Cahill's film was shot very cheaply, but I learned an awful lot working on it

that I've since applied to other work. It was one of the films I showed to John Dykstra when *STAR WARS* was getting off the ground."

"Right before *STAR WARS* I was a cameraman at Cascade. Jim Danforth was in charge of the department. David Allen was there along with talented people like Phil Tippet, Jon Berg, Tom Scherman, Ken Ralston, Bill Hedge, and others. It was a young special effects team capable of solving many of the problems that arise shooting effects for commercials for television. After about a year, though, they ran into financial difficulties and had to cut

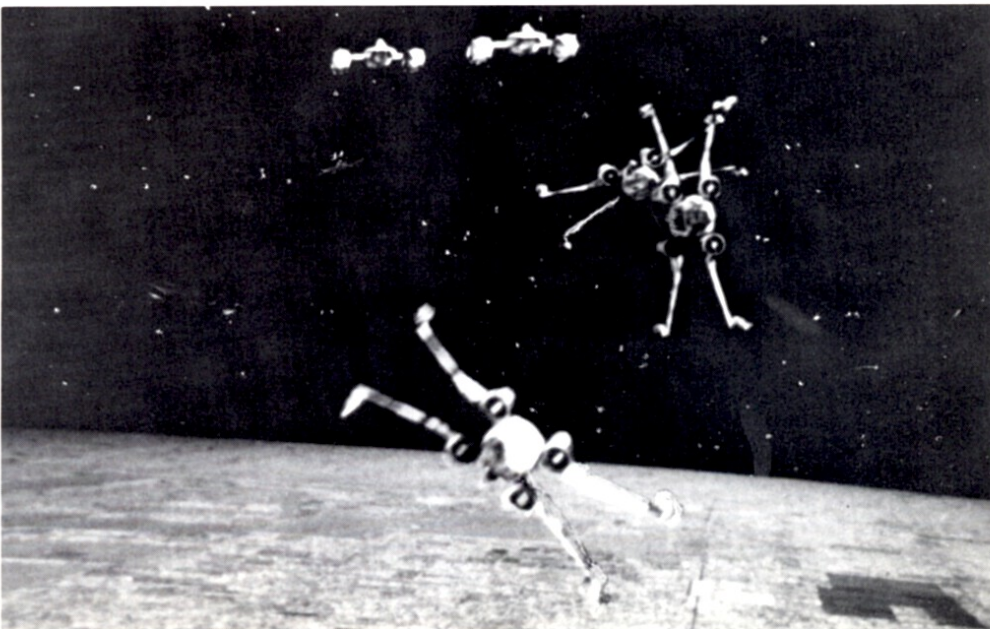
expenses. Dave Allen stayed on and the rest of us went free-lance."

While at Cascade, Muren learned of George Lucas' intent to make a film called *STAR WARS*. Having seen and been impressed by both the short and feature-length versions of Lucas' THX-1138, as well as his *AMERICAN GRAFFITI*, Muren felt sure a very interesting film was indeed in the works: "Bill Taylor and Jim Danforth talked to Lucas, but he was unresponsive. Apparently George wanted to do it one way and Danforth wanted to do it his own way. So I felt, if that's the case and if

**Dennis Muren prepares to photograph the chess game of little monsters—the animation by Jon Berg and Phil Tippet—for *STAR WARS*.**



One of the most difficult shots to photograph was the "peel-off" shot. Motion-controlling the ship's movements is actually a new form of dimensional animation—"programmed" continuously instead of one frame at a time. This scene summarized many accomplishments: 1. John Dykstra and crew's repeating, motorized camera. 2. Richard Edlund's blue screen development and improvements. 3. Dennis Muren's motion-control programming-animation. 4. Robert Blalock's composite optical. 5. Grant McCune and crew's models. 6. Joe Johnston's designs. 7. And, not least of all, George Lucas' vision.





George is a self-contained film maker, the chances are he would be unresponsive to anybody. Then I heard that John Dykstra had gotten the job, so I called him to see if there was any chance of me working on it. I went down to Universal, showed him my sample reel, including the UNIVERSE film. After not hearing from him for about ten months I figured the whole project had folded. But there were little stories going on around town about this company in Van Nuys that was buying equipment and setting up something in Vista-vision. After a while I realized it must have been for STAR WARS. Then I got a call from John to 'come on in.' Industrial Light and Magic had been going for seven months already by the beginning of May 1976. Richard Edlund was in charge of the camera end of things and I became the second cameraman. Richard, John Dykstra, Al Miller, Don Trumbull, Bill Shourt, Dick Alexander and a lot of technically oriented people custom-built all the equipment there, which is something I don't think had ever really been done before.

"When I first read the script I was at Phil Tippet's house and trying to talk with him at the same time. I just couldn't put it down. I was reading stuff out loud to him—like the Cantina sequence. It just read like a great sequence on paper. I think there were a number of people around here who read it and saw that it was going to become an exceptionally fine picture, but I don't think there were very many who thought it was going to be such a huge hit. George Lucas felt it might do \$20 or \$30 million, which would get their money back.

"There were a few people who thought it was just a stupid idea. There were many people who questioned George's wisdom in having us re-shoot things and changing boards and being such technical perfectionists. But when the film came out they quickly changed their minds.

"The storyboards were all drawn out before I became involved with the film, but they went through numerous changes. As it was originally set up, I was just going to shoot star and planet backgrounds, and Richard was going to shoot the ships. But as the deadlines came up we found that the only way we could do it in time was to have me shoot the ships in the evening. So I wound up working on the prime stuff and conferring with George about the shots throughout the film."

"George taught me some things I wasn't really into. For instance, I've always felt miniatures needed to be shot primarily to look big. But George wanted to go to the extent of shooting them as you'd actually shoot a normal 1977-style film. In a regular film, you jump from a wide angle lens to a telephoto lens and so forth. These are distinctly different 'looks'. George wanted the miniatures shot that way. We tried it a few times just to give it this modern photographic look. We wanted to avoid having everything look like it comes up from infinity racing past the camera, so there are



**The life pod, ejected from the rebel blockade runner, carries C-3PO and R2-D2 down to the surface of Tatooine.**

telephoto shots of the miniatures among others. Together we all agreed on the number of shots for which we'd come up with these different solutions.

"The crew didn't have an absolutely clear-cut idea of the rest of the production. George just wanted to surprise everyone. He basically wanted us to bring the storyboards to life. Industrial Light and Magic was providing a service: It was **not** an ILM film at all. We were just doing the effects. As it went on, however, we began to see more and more of the film as George would be around for three or four days a week, and occasionally show us a rough-cut sequence."

Special photographic effects and miniature work comprise 365 shots in STAR WARS. In order to handle such an incredible array of complex, time-consuming special effects, whole new approaches to film processes were taken: "I think there were a number of not only innovative processes, but **concepts** at work on this film. Certainly, as far as processes go, the Dykstraflex motion-control camera had never been used before; it allowed a very small

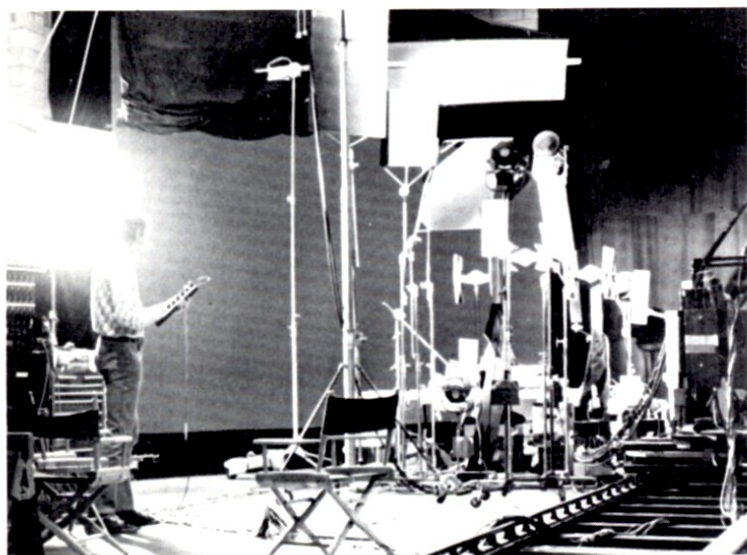
number of people in a low pressure situation to be able to duplicate an idea for a shot quite accurately. That's one important thing as far as processes. Another is that we took the blue screen process farther than it had ever been taken before, in our original photography and all the way through the opticals department. More as a conceptual accomplishment, however, on STAR WARS, that many people haven't recognized, is that 70 percent of the time we were following George Lucas' ideas for the shots. He'd say, 'What I need here is a shot that'll run 27 frames long, about this big on the ship against this background, camera pans like this (as he'd illustrate).' Now that's a director's vision. Many of the effects during the battle sequences were shot like that—using his vision. If a guy's an artist, which George is, and can tell you exactly what he wants, you wind up with a very pure vision.

"In a normal film, you'd have rockets flying around and the shots would tend to look like whatever was the method the effects person had chosen to create it; in other words the camera might be set up to hide the wires or to avoid panning off of the rear projection screen. In those cases, the limitations tended to dictate the look of the shot. This wasn't the case on STAR WARS.

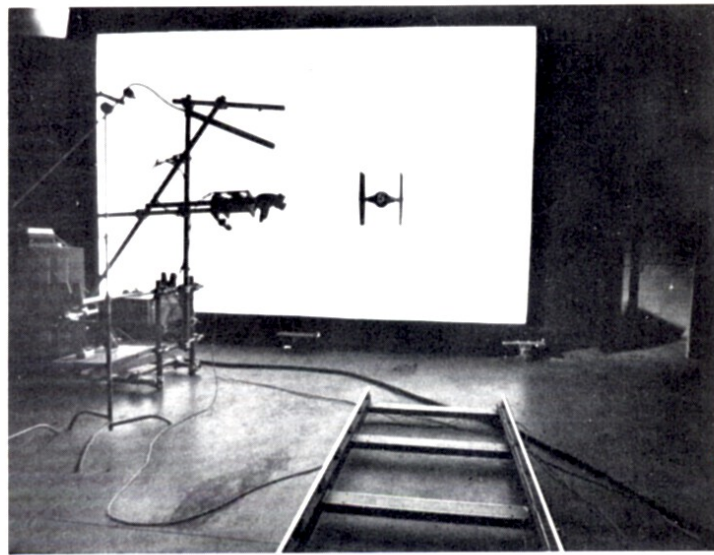
"We weren't slaves to doing George's shots, however. While we were following his ideas we could also add a lot of extra punch to them. As an example: George had assembled battle footage from old war movies and documentaries. Although we followed the look and placement of those planes in some of the shots, we could do a lot to punch up these shots, like accelerating the motions incredibly, exaggerating the sizes, making everything take place on a vaster scale, etc. The look of the effects is very true to itself. There were two things going on: The look that Richard and I put into a shot that was partially dictated by the abilities of the motion-control equipment, and the look that resulted from pantomiming the action footage of the old war plane footage.

"Two shots were real back-breakers. One of them was the 'peel-off' shot of the four X-Wings peeling off and diving down on the planet. That was a killer. The ships were shot one at a time, each with a different motion control program—a slightly different program for each because we didn't want it to look like each of the ships was going through the same mechanical motion each time. The other toughie was a shot nobody remembers: shot 292. It's a telephoto shot of three X-Wings flying toward the camera and banking on their sides; the stars are racing by in the background. They level off and fly into formation and all come right toward the camera. It probably lasted no more than 100 frames, but it was certainly the most difficult motion-control shot I had to do in the film. The problem came in adding action to these models, to make them look like they really were flying and like they had weight.

"We found, through a lot of experimenta-



**Some of the equipment involved in shooting one element consisting of three TIE ships. Muren is seen programming a shot with a device called a "joystick". The motion-control Dykstraflex camera is off to the right; the memory unit for the camera is behind Muren.**



**A TIE enemy spaceship model positioned in front of the blue screen at Industrial Light and Magic.**



tion, that the models didn't look like they were actually flying until we made them fly like airplanes; when they looked like they were acting on air, gliding and rolling and all those things that people are used to seeing, which in fact wouldn't happen in outer space, the illusion of flight was achieved.

"There was one shot that didn't work out; I was going to have the TIE ships diving down into the trench, as viewed from the trench. But it was done right near the end and we were all in a hurry. Somehow we got the wrong trench element to line up the ships, so when we put it all together it didn't work out and we didn't have time for a retake. By in large, most of the other shots worked out.

"To me STAR WARS was not a special effects film. It was an adventure, a kid's film. I wonder if the film would have been a success if there weren't as many effects in it. The end battle sequence, the interesting look of the spaceships and all those things that people had never seen before all helped the film. But the characters are great, even if they weren't as deep as they could have been. The whole picture was interesting from moment to moment, whether you were seeing actors or effects or robots—it was always interesting. And how many movies can you say that about?

## close encounters of the 3rd kind

"After I finished work on STAR WARS I was aware that CLOSE ENCOUNTERS was still going on. I thought it would be neat to work on both films because Lucas and Steven Spielberg are just about the best. I'd heard that they were in need of some help since everybody was working incredibly long hours to get the film finished. I called Bob Shepherd, the production manager, and he said they did need some help. So I went to work on it, initially to shoot sequences involving the mother ship at the end. I worked on the 'underbelly' sequence, which is where the ship has landed and people are watching this sort of gigantic light show that it's putting on. I was working with top people like Doug Trumbull and Richard Yuricich, who was the director of photography for photographic effects. Scott Squires was my assistant and he did a great job too.

"Doug would pretty much set up the shots and then it would be up to me to actually shoot them. Every shot was very time-consuming and exacting. A lot of projections and a lot of repeat motions with lights were involved. We were shooting in the 65mm format, shooting mattes on all the forms on the mother ship, so once each scene was set up it wasn't just shot in 20 minutes. Two days I'd have a shot done! Sometimes we would have exposures of up to 12 minutes total per frame of film. One

exposure might be seven minutes per frame; the next three minutes; another two minutes, etc. And as these factors added up it took Scott and me hours and hours to shoot a shot.

"As I finished up shooting this underbelly sequence—which took about two and a half months or so—I was seeing other portions of the film. Matt Yuricich was doing the matte paintings. They ended up with about 96 paintings. A lot of these the audience probably isn't even aware are trickwork. They were put in for the purpose of making a shot prettier and just simply for artistic reasons. For instance there'd be a horizon line on a live action scene and they'd think they could make it look better by playing down that line, so they'd employ a matte painting. And that was really great, working with a lot of people who could look at a shot and make it just about as perfect and spectacular as it could ever be. This was done with shot after shot.

"The look of the film is extremely controlled. That's the sort of thing people often don't recognize has to happen. There were artists on CLOSE ENCOUNTERS who could just look at a shot and maybe not know right away what could be done to improve it, but they'd try quite a few different things. Eventually, when something great was done they knew it was great and then they'd take it a little farther yet. Nobody was trying to do any sort of hack job. There is something to be said for having a lot of money and a bit of time to experiment. Here, on both STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS we finally had a situation in which we could spend a little bit of time and money trying different designs and shots."

Two days after completing the underbelly sequences Muren became quite ill with pneumonia—the result of overwork due to the lack of a break between two major projects. A month later he was back at work: "When I got back they'd just finished designing the entire mother ship. Up until this time we'd just shot the underbelly above the basecamp. The chief model maker, Greg Jein, was primarily responsible for building the miniature and I jumped right back into shooting the mother ship flying up over the mountain, landing, taking off again and moving over the stars.

"The model had 170,000 volts of neon inside of it, which was potentially deadly. We were shooting with all this high voltage within the ship, inside of a smoke-filled room. The smoke had an explosive temperature and if there was a certain spark created at a certain temperature the whole thing could ignite, the whole room could go up and with it the mother ship and all of the people working on it. So we were really careful.

"I don't know what other people think of it, but it is certainly unique, this enormous solid form with thousands of lights on it, floating majestically and rotating slowly. They experimented with other giant illuminated forms, before finally settling on this massive city-type

craft.

"Dave Stewart shot the UFO's. Primarily they were light sources of different shapes and sizes. Each saucer had a number of different light sources, each on a separate exposure. One source might be shot through smoke, then the camera would be re-wound and another source shot with a fog filter and so on. Some were shot with as many as seven different exposures, each with its own specialized environment—all to total up to just one saucer. Everything had been carefully predetermined, one step at a time. Each saucer was tested at various brightnesses and colors before any actual shots were made. There were a lot of electronics people, people who just specialized in neon alone, who helped create these UFO's.

"I think probably the closest thing to this film, just in terms of an artistic look that knocks you over with the beauty of its design elements, is WAR OF THE WORLDS. When you've got artists like Steven Spielberg and Doug Trumbull who have great, grandiose and original visions, and who are continuously bursting with energy, you're going to come up with something as imaginative as CLOSE ENCOUNTERS.

"Toward the end of the film, after the required shots of the mother ship had been done, Steven liked the way it floated through the sky so much that he decided to shoot the mother ship over the end titles. The script originally ended on a freeze frame of the photographs Jillian takes of the ship and the aliens. This was replaced by eight shots of the ship in the sky. Those I worked on with Steven. I drew up a few sketches and he said, 'Great, go ahead and shoot them.' So we spent over a month doing those shots. It was a chance to get nice looking views of the ship that we hadn't gotten in the text of the film.

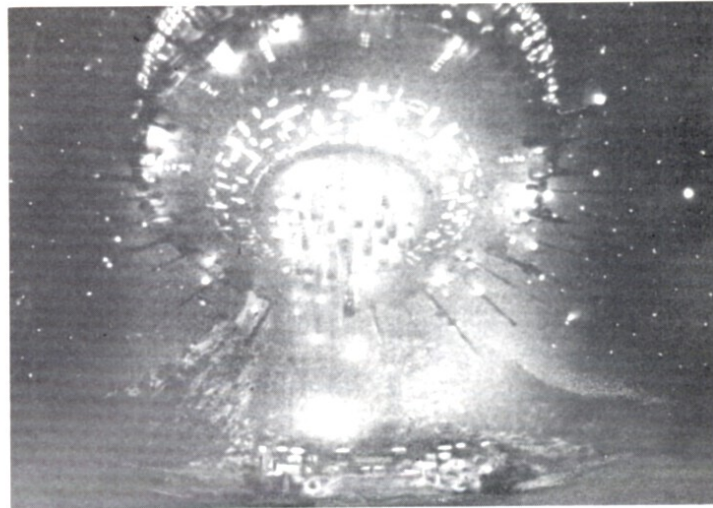
"Spielberg knew that if he could get 25 percent of the script into the film he'd have a good film. All the descriptions of cuboids and spheroids moving downfield and the 'phantom mass' in the script, these were part of Spielberg's attempt to indicate what kind of overall effect he wanted to achieve—and we got much more than 25 percent of it into the film.

"On GALACTICA I did very much the same thing I was doing on STAR WARS; shooting ships." GALACTICA is the three-hour epic television pilot for a new space series detailing a voyage across the galaxy by a caravan of starships—a sort of "Wagon Train" in outer space. GALACTICA has been sold for one season, about eight hours total, shown once a month.

GALACTICA has much of the look and scope of STAR WARS, much of which can be attributed to the fact it has the same production illustrator, Ralph McQuarrie. "The problems with shooting for TV, however, are that the images just don't show up as well, they have to be brighter lit and can't move as fast because television has that phosphorous streak. It still looks impressive on TV but not as spectacular as it would look in a theater.



"Something moves into the sky from the blind side of the mountain. It erases the stars, the absence of which gives the first indication of size and shape. It is elliptical and horrifyingly huge." The following elements were combined to bring this description from Spielberg's script to the screen: 1. Model of the mother ship. 2. Miniature of Devil's Tower. 3. Live-action basecamp set. 4. Matte paintings of runway lights. 5. Artwork of stars.



"ANGLE-DOWNFIELD TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN: This view shows the phantom mass in all its glory as lights explode all over it as it negotiates an aerodynamically impossible cartwheel maneuver." The mother ship was constructed of steel, fiberglass, glass and plastic model kit parts under the supervision of Greg Jein and Bob Shepherd.



The sheer size of a movie theater image adds a great deal of impact to a film.

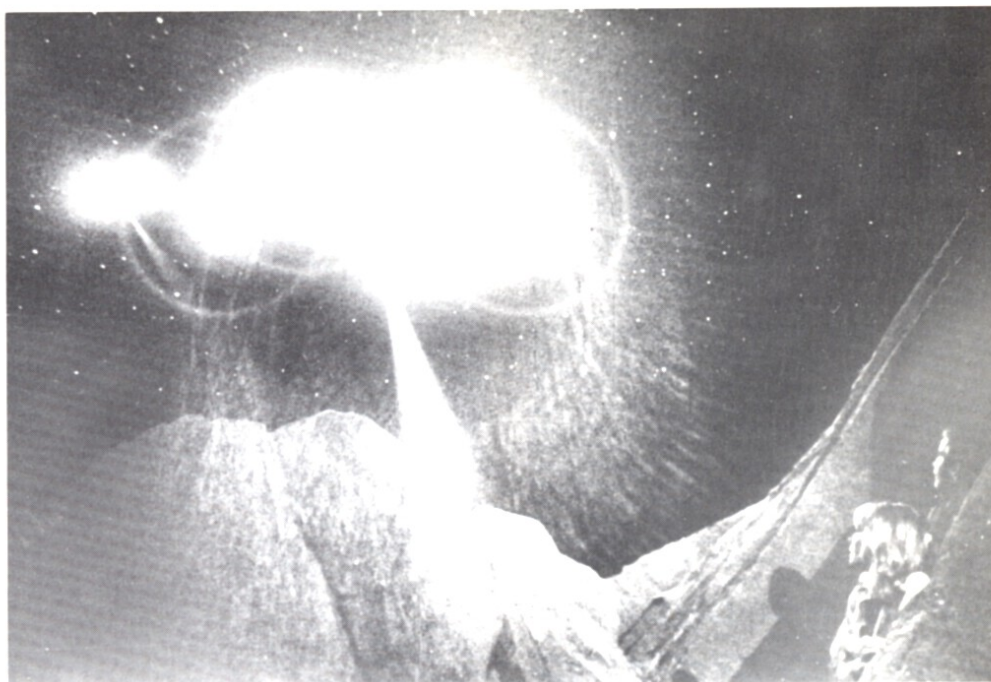
"I've had projects on my own ever since EQUINOX, but I'm really just enjoying where I'm at right now. It's nice to work on a project that'll be seen by millions of people. But I'd also like to direct another film. Eventually, I'll probably make a smaller film with stop motion work. I'd like to update stop motion photography to today's standards and make a new film with fantastic stop-motion characters, like a Hitchcock film, more like what CLOSE ENCOUNTERS is, where there is emphasis on the people and not just the effects. Low budget management of a film is probably where I'm at.

"I consider myself a special effects cameraman, but in this work, the effects cameraman tends to be the director of the miniature shooting as well. He will find out the requirements for a shot or sequence. Then it is his responsibility to assemble the models and equipment that are required, program the motion control equipment to add motion to the models, and finally light and shoot the shot. My own personal concern is to try and put together a shot that is better than anyone expected. This may sound like an obvious goal but you'd be surprised how many people in this business are satisfied with adequate work and seldom get up the energy to do something better.

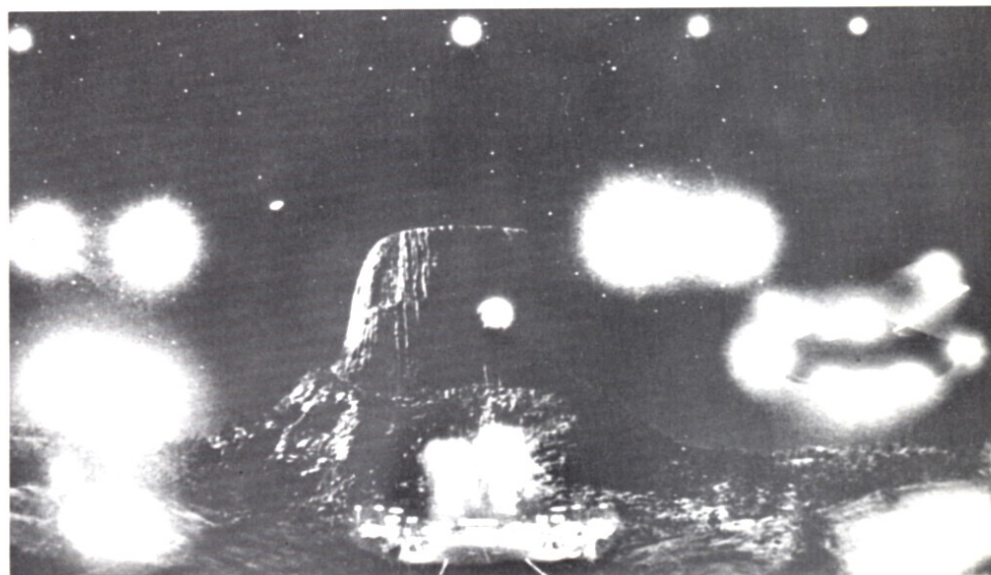
"I think special effects can be used to show an audience things that they've never seen before, never thought of before. But if the film isn't interesting, nobody will care. No matter how much work you put into the effects, with the most talented people around, if the story doesn't touch an audience, the special effects will be as noticed as good sound or good camera work, which is to say they'll just be there, playing to an empty theatre. But when they are used within a good film, the results are staggering and the audience is satisfied to the point of making these films some of the most popular of all time." □



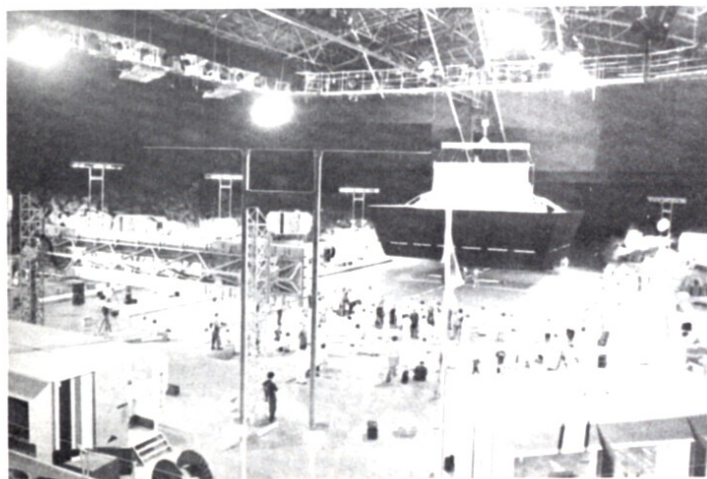
A U.F.O. light beams down from the sky.



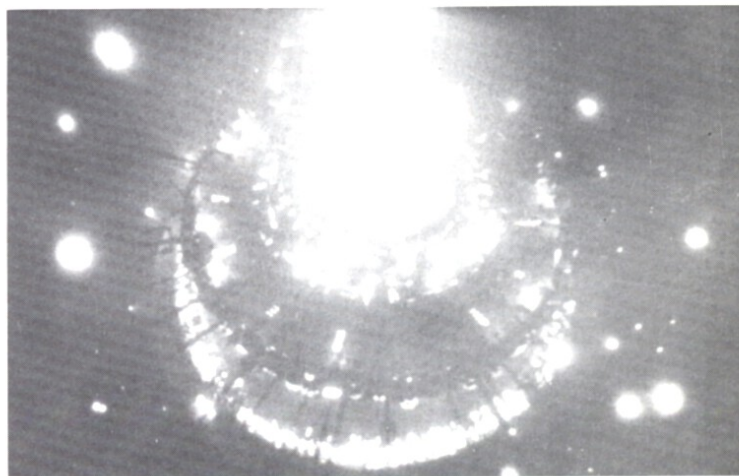
Jillian and Roy gaze upward at the first appearance of the U.F.O.'s above Devil's Tower.



Scene 213: "The convex planar lights disperse in all directions as they converge on the base of operations. They fan out and light everything with multiple shadows"

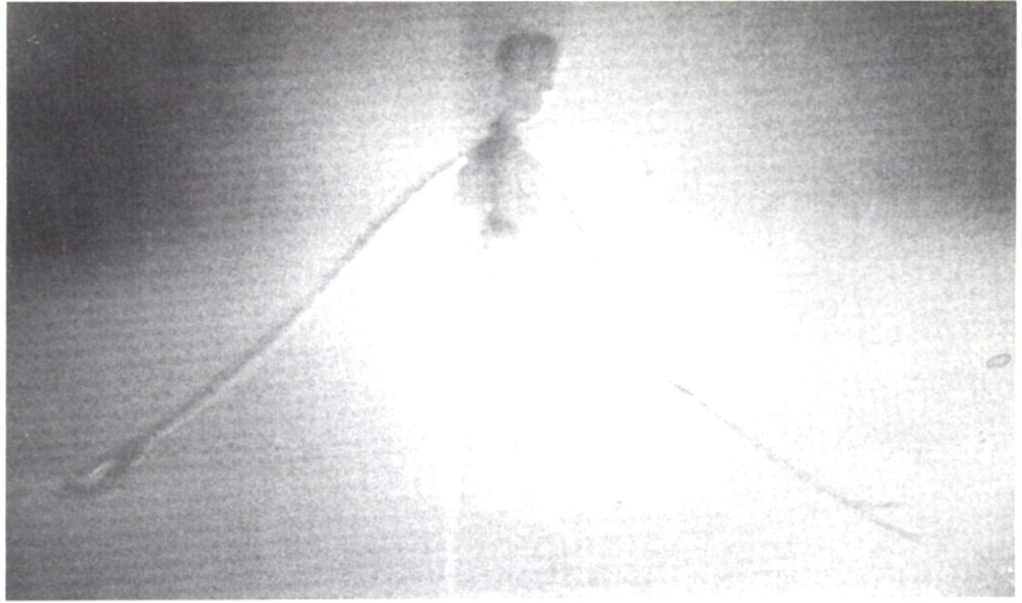


A dirigible hangar was converted into a gigantic sound stage to house the U.F.O. communications nexus. The black, block-like structure is the entry port to the mother ship. The rest of the mother ship's underbelly was a 6-foot wide model matted in.

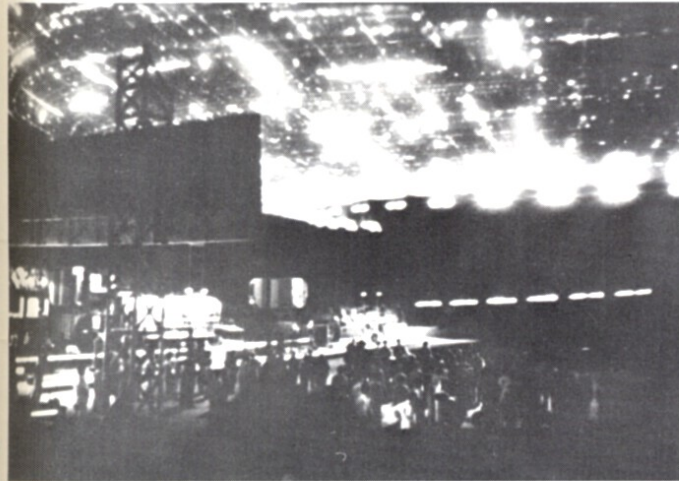


The mother ship, originally conceived by Spielberg as an immense black form, eventually evolved into the quarter mile wide city of light pictured here. The 350-pound miniature included complex internal electronics and tubes of neon which ran throughout the surface structures.



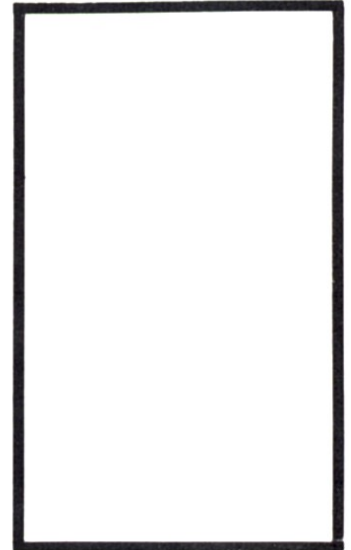


A variety of ideas were tried in creating the CLOSE ENCOUNTERS aliens. At the left is one of the child-like alien masks sculpted by David Ayers. These were worn by a number of small girls in the film. Many scenes of these playful creatures examining the Earth technicians with amusement, drinking or spilling Coca-Cola etc. were not used. On the right is Bob Baker's tenuous marionette of the "Father Alien." The pipe-limbed, visceral entity, as cleverly constructed by Baker, featured visible inner organs and a life-like beating heart.



The "underbelly" sequence photographed by Muren for CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. Each frame of the film required 16 minutes of exposure. The ship's lights were made up of four separate exposures.

"...a low-flying convex planar light with a bottomsides resembling a multi-colored electric griddle. As it gets closer, men duck or hide." Scenes like this employed an eight channel digital recording system capable of repeating exact camera moves on both a full-sized and scaled-down basis.



The complex underside of a small U.F.O.

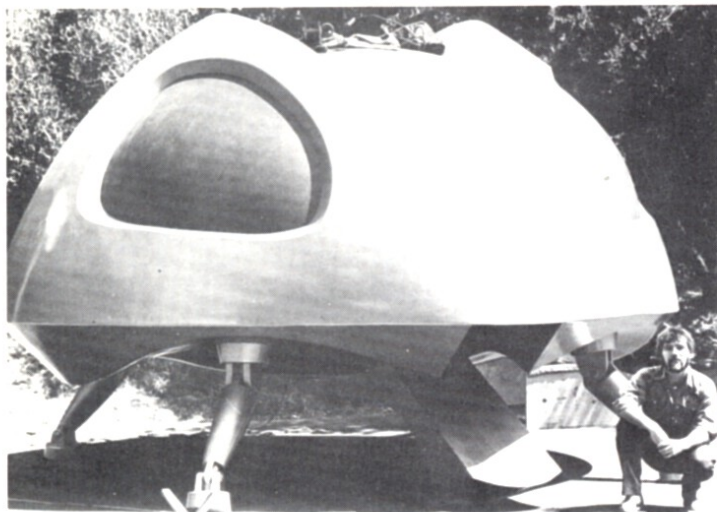


# THE ART OF MIKE MINOR

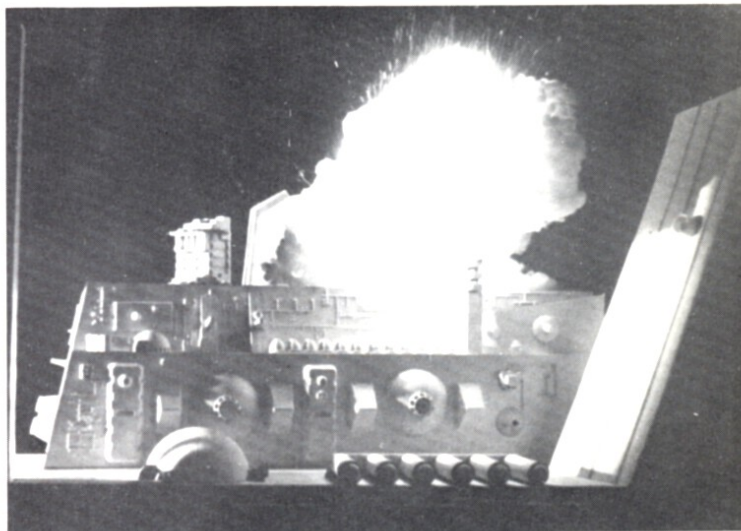
Mike Minor's talents have embellished many motion pictures, television shows, stage productions, magazines, books; i.e., just about every visual media known. An artist of consummate taste and versatility, he is equally adept as a painter, illustrator, designer, matte artist and sculptor.

The following is a brief glance at some of his accomplishments with, of course, the promise of much more to come.

by Elaine Edford and Robert Skotak



Spaceship from Disney's *CAT FROM OUTER SPACE*. Mike Minor poses with the \$30,000 fiberglass exterior shell scaled up from his one-foot clay sculpture. Green-lit windows highlight the silver finish.



A section of *STAR WAR*'s Death Star explodes—in actuality Mike Minor's model work. Scene wound up on the cutting room floor.

Mike Minor literally grew up in movie houses. Not surprising, since his father was a motion picture exhibitor. At the age of ten—inspired by the likes of *DESTINATION MOON*—he picked up a copy of Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* and has been hooked on science fiction ever since. His family moved to Los Angeles in 1956 and from there he involved himself in film work in high school, then went on to theater design in college.

Minor's talents usually far outclassed the projects themselves. He created beautiful backdrops and miniatures for TV's *LAND OF THE LOST*; dynamic miniature designs and mattes for kid-vid's *FAR OUT SPACE NUTS*; mattes for *THE NEW MICKEY MOUSE CLUB*; and much of whatever was visually impressive in the otherwise regrettable *FLESH GORDON* was the result of Minor's imagination. In 1974 he co-created a series of shadow box miniatures for the Los Angeles "Filmex" representing scenes from George Pal's science-fiction films. And on his own he has rendered an endless array of stunning astronomical land and architectural-scapes.

"I'm an artist first of all and like dynamics. I studied the work of William Menzies in *GONE WITH THE WIND* and loved the dynamics and compositions of the George Pal pictures. I'm very much of a colorist and think and dream in film terms. I grew up on film and amused myself so much I can't get away from it. When I read a book I see it in terms of camera shots and angles. . . . When I read a script I instantly have sketches in my mind."

Due to the early influence of the Pal films, Minor built detailed models of the ships in *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE*, *DESTINATION MOON*, *CONQUEST OF SPACE*, et al—often extraordinarily detailed and built without pictorial reference. "Everybody starts by copying what they like. I built balsa wood models of the space ark, and the Martian war machines. You have partial success and say, 'My backdrop isn't nearly as good as the movie, but it's pretty good!' It was just play—but play with a purpose. . . . I was influenced by the dynamics in shots like the one in *WAR OF THE WORLDS* where Gene Barry and Ann Robinson are dashing out in back of the farmhouse. That's the most successful matte in the show, because it just pops out at you; the sky is jet blue, with red rays. They're running over the hillside and everything works."

"Republic serials were another big influence. . . . I think the greatest man ever was Theodore

Lydecker. In those serials he did incredible shots out of doors using forced perspective and real sunlight—nothing indoors and big scale. *KING OF THE ROCKET MEN* was the damndest serial ever made. Those guys in the rocket suits could go anywhere; Lydecker had full-sized figures sliding along wires, whereas most people built windup toys. That's the difference."

Among his first professional jobs: "In 1967 I did landscape paintings for *STAR TREK* [intended to] demonstrate the beauty of the cosmos. I did 20 paintings and they were used by the set decorator on the walls of the Enterprise, but very small and rarely seen." After that Minor designed and created effects and creatures for a few *TREK* episodes, including "The Tholian Web" and "Spectre of the Gun."

"In 1971 I started *FLESH GORDON*. The budget grew to \$100,000 to \$200,000. . . . I had the whole visual concept under me—including the storyboards for the effects. That whole film grew organically, by which I mean the producers only vaguely knew what they wanted it to look like. They'd say, 'Give me a *WIZARD OF OZ* look' or something because they didn't know what they wanted. I designed and supervised the model building. Storyboarding can give you some control, it's a direction. . . . so I controlled *FLESH GORDON* from that aspect."

From there, Minor's list of credits grew even longer in creating mattes and models for several fantasy-oriented TV shows. Recently this included underseascapes for *THE MAN FROM ATLANTIS*. Minor originated a concept of creating large, lightweight underwater mountain ranges out of formed heavy-duty foil covered with sawdust and paint.

Minor's studio, filled with working tools and jammed with paintings, photographs, sketches, slides and sculptures gives ample evidence of his busy schedule. Yet he takes what little spare time he has once a year to lend his talents to an event unique to the Hollywood area: Every Halloween for the last ten years well-known science fiction personality Bob Burns has sponsored an elaborate show "fantastique" in his Burbank backyard. The remarkable talents of people like Tom Scherman, Dennis Muren, Rick Baker and Burns himself have made for memorably spectacular mini-shows based on such films as *THE EXORCIST*, *THE TIME MACHINE* and *FORBIDDEN PLANET*. For each of these, Minor has contributed ingenious designs and backdrops that have helped to make these shows something very special.

Several years ago, Mike combined his talents with Tom Scherman and Burns toward developing a pilot for a potential TV show entitled *MAJOR MARS*. The result: a charmingly successful spoof of everything from the Republic serials and *FLASH GORDON* to shows like *SPACE PATROL*. "Tom secured screen treatment funds for a presentation. We had no producer and just a few days to shoot the whole thing. I was the art director and designed the sets and aided Tom in building the models and dressing the sets. Tom wanted that smart 50's Republic serial look—smart blonde furniture. It was very cheap but was supposed to be; but that's the fun. . . . So we'd throw things together like old rheostats and things from junk stores."

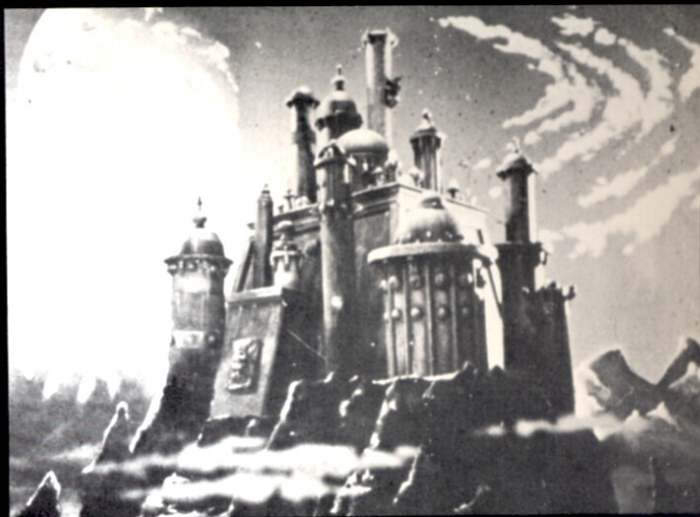
"In 1973 I met George Lucas at American Zoetrope and showed him the stuff I'd done on *STAR TREK*, but I never heard from him again, until I was out at Disney Studios. I got a call from Gary Kurtz in August of '76 and I met with him and Lucas. They had me pick up a lot of new shots in the Cantina scene that they hadn't been too happy with." Several weeks later at Producer's Studio, they were shooting explosions on the surface of the Death Star. Minor was commissioned to create a point-of-view shot from the Death Star's surface as explosions rock the structures. He built a miniature (pictured) and shot it; the scene, however, was ultimately not used.

"In the early 1960's, Mike acted under inspiration and his love of *The Martian Chronicles* and storyboarded much of the novel as if it were actually a motion picture screenplay. These included all set and costume designs, camera compositions and so forth. He showed these to Ray Bradbury and this almost led to the story being produced as a \$12 million feature by Pakula-Mulligan productions. More recently, Minor's design work contributed much to making the Los Angeles-based theatrical production of *The Martian Chronicles* into an overwhelming success."

Currently, Mike is typically involved in several projects at once—a major one being that of production illustrator of the new *STAR TREK*. He is also co-designing brand new effects sequences in the re-vamping of the classic *ROCKETSHIP X-M*, due for extensive re-release.

All of which is to say this is just the beginning of what will hopefully be many more years of creativity and ever-growing success for Mike Minor. □





Top row, left: Mike Minor's background plate painting for TV's LAND OF THE LOST. Gene Warren's animation effects were mixed over the art. Right: Unused glass painting establishing shot of Wang's castle in FLESH GORDON. The beautiful color image elicited the rather typical reaction from the producer: "It's too... too cartoony!" Middle row, left: Cast foam head of a "Melkotian," created by Minor for third season episode of STAR TREK entitled "Spectre of the Gun." Right: A scene from "WAR OF THE WORLDS," one of the annual Halloween shows produced by Bob Burns in California. This version was inspired by Orson Welles' radio play. Minor created the full-size (three stories) spaceship; Tom Scherman designed the Martian and Dennis Muren handled the atmospheric lighting effects. Bottom row, left: Interior of the Martian home from the "Ylla" episode of "The Martian Chronicles," as envisioned by Mike Minor. Right: Minor's 1964 costume sketch for "The Martian Chronicles" when it was being considered for filming by Pakula-Mulligan Productions.



